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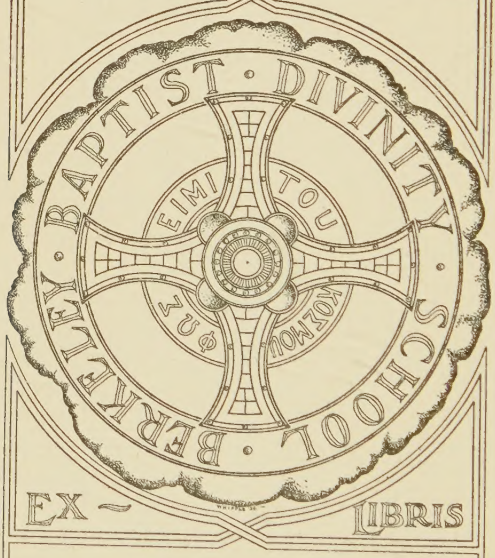

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New Starts in Life

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THE WAITING CITY.

A CITY throned upon the height behold,
Wherein no foot of man as yet has trod;
The City of Man's Life fulfilled in God.
Bathed all in light, with open gates of gold,
Perfect the City is in tower and street;
And there a Palace for each mortal waits,
Complete and perfect, at whose outer gates
An Angel stands its occupant to greet.
Still shine, O patient City on the height,
The while our race in hut and hovel dwells.
It hears the music of thy heavenly bells
And its dull soul is haunted by thy light.
Lo, once the Son of Man hath heard thy call
And the dear Christ hath claimed thee for us all.

PHILLIPS BROOKS.

S. S. "PAVONIA,"
September, 1892.

NEW STARTS IN LIFE.

I.

NEW STARTS IN LIFE.

"And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day he sent them into his vineyard."—MATTHEW xx. 2.

THE parable from which these words are taken is one of the most complete in its details of any that the Saviour ever spoke. It covers a whole day, and as we read it the whole course of the day stands out clear before us. In the words which I have quoted we are set at one moment of the vivid story and can see exactly what is going on. The master of a vineyard having gone out into the highways and found some workmen waiting there now stands at his vineyard gate and, coming to an agreement with each man about the wages which he will receive, he sends each in succession into the great field where the work is waiting. It is a bright, fresh picture. Everything is sparkling in the morning light. The men all ready for work stand waiting. The master, thoughtful and considerate, stands talking with them. Through the open door we see the vineyard

with its long rows of young vines. Here is strength waiting for work. Here is work waiting for strength. The two are just upon the point of touching one another. There is no sense of exhaustion anywhere. Everything shines with vigor and hope. There is no limit to the work which we dream may be done before the day is over. The exhilaration of beginning fills the verses.

A man has faded out of the real happiness and strength of life who does not know what that exhilaration is, who does not feel the brightness of the picture which this verse draws. It is sad indeed when any man comes to that state in which each new day does not seem in some true sense to begin the world anew, recalling every departed hope and brightening every faded color of the night before. There is a human instinct which tells us that our life, while it is meant to have a great continuousness and to be always one, is no less meant to be full of new starts, to be ever refreshing its forces and beginning once again. The true proportion between these two feelings, between the sense of continuity and the sense of ever new beginning, makes the finest, the freshest, and the primest life. We may picture to ourselves two rivers of wholly different kinds. One is a great, broad, quiet stream, ever moving swiftly but smoothly on, unbroken by rapids, majestic in its calm and noble monotony, each mile of its great course seeming like every other mile, so perfectly and evidently is it everywhere itself. Its great thought is continuity. The other river is a mountain torrent. Broken and stopped perpetually,

it is always gathering itself up in a pool, at the foot of the rock that stopped it, for a fresh start. It is always full of new beginnings. It is different in each mile of its course from what it is in every other mile; when it grows calm for a moment it seems as if it had wholly stopped, until it finds an outlet and plunges down another precipice, and with a new cascade begins its life again. Like the first stream, like the majestic and continuous river, is the life of God. Continuousness and identity is our great thought of Him. "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God," we cry. Full of movement, the impression of His life is stillness, like the impression of the vast and solemn Nile. But like the mountain torrent is the life of man. With a true continuity, so that it is the same life from its beginning to its end, it yet forever is refreshing its vitality with new beginnings. It loves to turn sharp corners into unseen ways. It loves to gather itself into knots and then start out with the new birth of a new resolution. It loves to take into itself the streams of newborn lives that its monotony may be refreshed with their freshness. It is wonderful how ingenious men will be in making artificial new starts in their lives, as if at midday they shut up the house and lighted all the lamps and made believe that it was night, only in order that in a moment they might fling the shutters back again as if a new morning had come with its enthusiasm. So all live men covet the exhilaration of beginning.

I want to speak to-day about beginnings or new starts in life. It is a subject which the time sug-

gests. For, beside the aspect of perpetual renewal of which I have been speaking, life here among us in the city in these autumn days has a peculiar look of newness which belongs to the season and the place. For in our city life we have changed the feeling of the seasons. The autumn is the real spring-time of the town. It is then that the gray pastures of our paved streets begin to blossom once again with their bright flowers of enterprise and fellowship and charity. And I am speaking this morning to more of the spirit of expectation, of experiment, of new hope in new circumstances than I should find here at any other season of the year. The schools have just begun ; the college boys have started their new year. The young recruits in all the old professions are making the old ranks look young again with that perpetual youth which one of the great professions always keeps. In many ways there is a sense of stir and start about us. He must be dull who does not feel it. And so I want to speak about the true dignity and beauty of beginnings.

The essential power of a new beginning, then, seems to be very simple. It is that it recalls and freshens the principle and fundamental motive under which a work is done, and so keeps it from degenerating into mechanical routine. When the stream starts over a new fall it cannot help being conscious anew of its own fluidness and of the force of gravitation. It is the renewed sense of these things, of what it is and of what a great power is at work upon it, that sparkles in it and fills it full of life as it begins its new career, which is simply the old career with

its fundamental consciousness freshened and revived. And so when a man starts afresh, either with the newness of a new day, or with the stimulus of altered circumstances, or with the inspiration of a new work, what his new start ought to do for him is to refresh the deepest principles by which he lives. You feel the engine when the steamer starts. After that when the steamer is on its long monotonous voyage you feel as if the machinery moved itself. So in a new beginning men ought to feel, and in some way more or less real and clear they do feel, what they are and what great powers are at work upon them, as they do not ordinarily feel these things in common times.

Let us keep all this in our mind as we come back and stand in the bright morning light which floods the vineyard gate where the laborers of the parable are just beginning their day's work. "When the householder had agreed with them for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard." In that verse, taken as the story of the way in which human life as a whole and also of the way in which any special department or enterprise of human life begins, there are two ideas—which we may examine and develop in succession. One of them is the idea of mission. The other is the idea of wages. First the master of the vineyard sends the men to do their work, and second he agrees with them for "a penny a day." We will look at these two ideas in relation to the great new starts or beginnings that come in every full human life.

I. First the idea of mission. "He sent them in

his vineyard." "He," in the parable, means God in human life. See what a personality steps at once into the story and see how, when it once is there, it cannot be left out again. The whole story lives and moves and has its being in that central person, by whose sending the laborers start out on their day's work. Suppose at first that you did not see the householder. Suppose you only saw a host of workmen with their tools streaming in through an open vineyard gate. "What are they going for?" you say. The answer must be one of two. Either it is the mere pleasure of the exercise they love, as when a company of boys go hurrying to a fruitless, profitless game of ball, for the pure pleasure of the game, or else it is the desire for something that they are to get, some profits, some reward that lies waiting for them in the vineyard. Both of these are conceivable, both are legitimate motives. And motives which correspond to both of them come in legitimately at every beginning in our lives. Any new undertaking of ours may properly be inspired by the pleasure which we find in its execution and by the advantage which it will bring to us when it is finished. But now put in the householder. Set him in your picture beside the vineyard gate. Make every laborer who passes in pass under his inspection, go in by his commission, and then have you not put another motive in which does not exclude the others but surrounds and comprehends them? Now you ask any laborer why he is there, and pointing back to the master at the gate, he says, "He sent me." No matter how much any laborer might

love the work or want the profits, he would have no right to be there unless the householder had sent him in. Do you not see the parable? Whenever any man believes that God has given him a work to do that belief becomes the great motive of his labor. It does not exclude the others, but it overshadows and, as it were, includes them. Still the man may find the work delightful and may expect from it a great result, but when you ask him why he does it, he rises from his happy toil and points back to where God stands beside the gate and says, "He sent me." However he might love the work, whatever advantage he might look for from it, he would have no right to be doing it if God had not sent him.

Every work ought to begin simply and with one clear simple motive. It is not pleasant to hear the beginner in any work talk too far-looking talk, anticipate the gain that lies for him far away when his work shall have been successful. Prophecies are too doubtful, and this anticipative spirit is too apt to be discouraged. Some cloud comes between the beginner and his vision of the end, and his impulse is all gone. Nor is it pleasant to hear the new worker congratulating himself that his work is pleasant, that he loves it, and trusting to that love for his energy and his persistence. There will surely come times when the love will grow dull, when the enthusiasm will flicker. What then? There must be some authority that impels as well as some attraction that invites. Not merely a bright vineyard but a majestic master of the vineyard there must be. All serious men have craved a master as well as a

task. Some workers call their master duty. Others wiser and devouter call him "God," but all have done their best work only when they were not merely called by the thing that was to be done but sent by him for whom they were to do it. It is like the going of the arrow out of the bow. The starting arrow is only conscious of the string, not yet has it any perception of the target. You question it as it goes flying past you, and ask it why it takes that track, and its reply is not "Because the target stands this way," but "Because this way the bow-string sent me." It is only in going where the bow-string sent it that the arrow finds first the joy of the rushing air and then at last the satisfaction as it buries itself into the very centre of the target.

"Like arrows in the hand of a giant so are the young children," says the Psalm. The child's life is marked by this, that it is conscious of impulse far more than of aim. It does all that it does because its father sent it, not because the essential attractiveness of the task invited it. If the task's attractiveness is felt it is as an accidental pleasure, not as the main motive. The main motive is the Father's will. And in God's family we are all children always. We are God's arrows. Not because the end attracts us, but because He says to us "Go" must be the main motive for our going. This is so clear in the life of Jesus, the perfect Son of God. No man ever felt as He felt the essential joy of holy work. No man ever saw as He saw the glorious fruits of holiness. And yet it was not for these at last that He always

said that He was holy. The last, the deepest, and the strongest reason was that his Father sent Him. "I came down from heaven not to do mine own will but the will of Him that sent me." Those are the key words of His life. And these words do not necessarily mean, I beg you to observe, that his will was contrary to the will of Him who sent him. They apply even when the wills are just the same. Then it meant everything to Jesus that the action which he did, though outwardly it would have been just the same act in either case, was done not because he wanted to do it, though he did, but because his Father wanted him to do it. "Father, not my will but thine be done," Jesus was always saying even when there was no difference in what the two wills separately would have chosen. In that word "Father" lies the commission of his life. Only to a father would one have a right to say that, but when one once knew God to be his father there could be no other real completion of his life, no other crowning and filling of it with its consummate motive.

I am afraid this looks to some of you like foolish subtlety, but, indeed, my friends, it is not so. Let me try to apply it more closely and show how practical it is. I said that there were certain different beginnings in men's lives to which the parable of our text might be applied. In every full life, in the life of every man who goes through the whole circle of what a man ought to be, there must be at least three such beginnings or new starts, and to each of those three we may apply what I have just been saying. These three beginnings are: 1. Youth, or the

start of the physical life. 2. The choice of occupation or the deliberate selection of one's work; and 3. Religious consecration or the entrance of the soul in its deeper life with God. No man lives completely who does not at least start in each of these three roads. O, think of it, you to whom only the first beginning has any recognizable reality. You who were born, but who have never entered upon any work upon the earth and who have known nothing whatever of that deeper birth in which the spirit takes up a willing loyalty to God. This is the measure of your wretched incompleteness. Judged by the standard of the completest human being, does it not seem as if you were really nearer to the brutes than to Him. For you have entered upon only the first and lowest of careers, and even for that it may be, as we shall see, that you have not begun to conceive the true motive which gives it its real value.

Take the mere physical beginning. How beautiful it is! It is not confined to any one moment when the new-born being first catches with a gasp our earthly air. It runs through all those bright and happy years which we call youth, the years in which the physical life is always coming to some new relation to the earth where it has freshly come. Youth is but one long birth. The leaping of new tastes, the timid trying of new skills, the ripening of the senses in answer to the skies they see and the world full of melody which they are ever hearing. Youth is one long bright being born—one rich and gradual beginning. And what shall be its consciousness, its great prevailing feeling about this life that lies be-

fore it ? O my young friends, the world is beautiful and every breath of your young life is happiness. You have a full right to feel that! And life is full of promise. There are great prizes to be gained in this great world with which your relations grow completer every day. But those are not all. These two are like two flowers which need a stem to hold them and to give them life. If they have no stem and try to live alone, they are doomed to wither. The stem must be the consciousness of God, God as the sender and the source of life. The instant that consciousness stands up firm and complete everything else takes its true place and value. The beauty of the flowers means something when they hang upon the stem. It means seed and endless perpetuity of growth. A young man to whom life stretching out before him is not merely something which attracts him for himself but something to which God has sent him with a commission to live peculiarly his own, to him youth gets its full glory. His spirit, as he gazes forth into the future, is full at once of humility and hope. Into his beginning work there comes a noble union of energy and repose. Responsibility becomes to him an inspiration, not a weight. There is an utter absence of frivolity, a perfect seriousness, and at the same time an absolute buoyancy and joy. Is not that what we all want to see in youth as its chief glory. There is a youth which sets forth on the sea of life as a pleasure yacht sails from her moorings on a summer morning. All is gay and bright and trifling, all is light and laughter. She sails because the wind is fair and the sea smooth.

No one bids her go and there is no port for her to seek. There is another youth whose start is like the sailing of a great deep-freighted ship. There is no less joy and exhilaration, but there is no laughter. Faces are serious. Still the sweet freshness in the breeze, the sunlight on the water, bring their influence of happiness, but there is so much underneath. This ship is sent. Great interests are embarked in her. She is freighted with sacred hopes. And so she sails forth in the silence of a joy that does not break out in chattering talk. Such is the sacred joy that fills a child's, a young man's, or young woman's life to whom the simplest and greatest of all truths has come, that they are going forth into life sent by God. That just as truly as He sent Moses, David, Paul, Luther, God has sent them into life out of His own great hand. O parents, what a task and privilege is yours—to make God so real to your children's life that they shall know that He did send them ; and so to make God great and true and sweet and good to your children's first thoughts of Him, that they shall rejoice and triumph in the knowledge that they are sent by such a God as He is.

II. The second beginning which I spoke of was the start of a new occupation, the deliberate entrance by a young man upon what is to be the profession of his life. With regard to that time I think that all of us who have seen many men will bear witness that it is just there that very many men grow narrow, and, from being broad in sympathies, large, generous, humane, before, even in all the crudity of their boy-

hood, the moment of the choice of their profession seems to make them limited and special, shuts them up between narrow walls, makes them uninteresting to all the world outside their little work, and makes all the world outside their little work uninteresting to them. It is not strange. The works that men must do to live become more and more special and absorbing. Anybody who thinks about it sees that the escape must be not in the worker refusing to do one work and undertaking to do all things. It must be in his doing his one thing in a larger spirit. Where shall that larger spirit come from ? The spirit of an act comes from its motive. There must be a larger motive then. And the largest of all motives is the sending of God, the commission of Him who is the Father of us all. When the young lawyer dares to believe beyond the pleasure which he finds in the practice of the law, beyond the fortune or the fame that he hopes to make out of it, that God sent him there, that the fitness for it which he has found in his character and circumstances is something more than a lucky accident, is a true sign of the intention concerning him of the dear, wise God ; when a young lawyer dares to believe this, two great blessings come to him out of so high a faith: first he is armed against the lower temptations of his profession, and second, he is kept in cordial sympathy with all other children of God who are trying to find and follow the same Father's intentions concerning them, though in works utterly different from his. The true salvation from the sordidness and narrowness of professional life comes only with a profound

faith that God sent us to be the thing we are, to do the work that we are doing.

III. And then with regard to the third great beginning which comes in every man's life who lives completely, the beginning of conscious religion, of the deliberate consecration to God and culture of the soul. It begins in every kind of way, suddenly with one man, gradually with another. With one man like the swift illumination of a flash of lightning, with another man like the slow brightening of the dawn; but to all men who come to their full life it surely comes by that unchangeable necessity which is in the words of Jesus, " Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God "; and no man truly lives who does not see that kingdom. But of this deeper life, the life of spiritual struggle, of prayer, of search after divine communion, the life that sacrifices the body for the soul, that hopes for heaven and overcomes the world by faith, of this life so misty and vague to many men, so much realler than all realities besides to every man who lives it, what is the motive power ? why do the best souls undertake it ? The simplest answer is the truest, I believe. Because God calls them into it. Ask me why I am a Christian, and I may say, " Because the Christian life is satisfactory and full of daily sweetness," or I may say, " Because in the certain distance hangs the prize of everlasting life." Both are good answers. But suppose I say, " Because God bade me be." That is a better answer. It includes both the others. The soul that makes it is sure of happiness and reward not by its own direct

perception of them but because they are involved in the very nature of God, in obedience to whose authority it gives itself to Him. It makes the persistence of the Christian life depend not on the constancy of our emotions but on the unremitting sense of the Divine authority. The best and noblest Christians, I am sure, have always most loved to give this simplest account of their experience. "Why are you in the vineyard?" "Because He sent me," that is all. Afterward the perception of the sweetness of the work, but first of all because He sent me. O my young friends to whom the soul's life with its vast hopes and mysterious joys is just opening, I beg you to set at the gate through which you enter into it the simple authority of your master. Come to your Lord because He calls you. As John and James came off the lake where they were fishing; as Matthew came out of the shop where he was gathering taxes; for only to the soul that first gives itself to Him in unquestioning obedience can Christ give himself in unhindered love.

I must pass on to say a few words on what we saw to be the second point suggested in our text, namely, the wages which were promised to those whom the master sent into his vineyard. "When he had agreed with them for a penny a day he sent them into his vineyard." The first thing that strikes us is that there should be any wages. It is that truth of covenant, that picture of a bargain between God and man which runs through all the Bible, and has often given much trouble to very spiritual and un-

selfish hearts. " Can I not give myself to God and God promise me nothing ? Must I have a promise of advantage to myself, to watch every consecration of myself to Him whom I love better than my life ? Is not the ' penny a day ' an intrusion and offence coming in between me and my Lord ? " Such thoughts have come to many minds. I know but one answer. The master owes something to himself as well as to his laborers. He owes it to himself to recognize the service that they give him. Not even from the child will the father take a wholly unacknowledged duty. The " penny a day " is wages, but it is wages raised to its highest power in love. It is valuable not for itself alone, but as the token of the master's recognition of the service. In other words, I think we have the perpetual recurrence of the covenant idea all through the Bible until something of it appears even in the mystery of the Atonement, and the precious sacrifice of Calvary is called the " Blood of the Everlasting Covenant " ; we have in all this not a degradation of the spiritual relations to a commercial sordidness, we have rather an exaltation of the essential idea of commerce, an assertion of the invariable and beautiful reciprocity which runs through all the universe; a declaration that righteousness and justice, the return of like for like, is not an arbitrary arrangement, which can be tampered with or repealed, but is in the very nature of all things and beings because it is in the nature of Him from whom all things and beings come.

And then, if the idea of wages need not trouble us, see what the special wages are which the Lord

offers. He agreed with them for a penny a day. It was no outright gift, given in bulk, one large, round sum with which He fastened their allegiance. It was to be a daily payment. Evening by evening they were to come to him, and only gradually should the money accumulate and grow large in their hands. What picture could more truly show the way in which the Lord gives His rewards to all His servants? What could more truly set before us all the kind of promise which He makes us as we begin our life, or our profession, or our soul's experience at His command! Not in one complete gift is physical life bestowed on any child. "A penny a day" is the promise which is fulfilled in the slow development of the vital powers which goes on all through the infancy and early years. Not all at once are the fruits of a new career or profession put into the eager hands of the young aspirant. "A penny a day" comes scholarship to the scholar, power to the statesman, wealth to the merchant. Not all at once does the new Christian win the completeness of his Saviour's grace. "A penny a day"! "A penny a day"! so only does the soul grow rich, so only are truthfulness, courage, humility, patience, love, faithfulness given to the soul and made its own. Surely it is a kind warning of the master at the open gate. He will not have us disappointed. O, hear His warning, you who are taking any of His invitations. You cannot take it all at once. Even to His Incarnate Son God gave life in slow development. What wonder if to us it comes with a slowness that makes us often despair; and

yet when it does come completely we shall know that except as it was thus slowly given it never could have been made really ours at all.

There is a reason for this method of God's gifts which we soon learn to know. It lies in two truths. The first is that the very nature of the soul itself requires it. The soul appropriates slowly. A torrent drowns the soil which a rain would make fertile. There is such a thing as a soul gorged with blessing and not fed.

And the other reason is still truer and deeper. The object of God's giving us any gift is not that we may possess the gift, but that through the possession of the gift we may possess Him. The gift is a pledge to assure us of His presence and His love. God's gifts are given to us not like robes to clothe us in. The only robe in which we can be clothed is He Himself, His righteousness made truly ours not in an unreal, artificial sense, but really, truly. The gifts He gives us are the clasps that hold the robe about us—not the robe. Therefore it is that they are given only as they are required. Not once for all, so that we might take them on our shoulders and go away and forget the Giver, but day by day, so that each day the day's gift might make the giver real and so all life be filled with Him.

I have spoken mainly to the young to-day. At least, they have been mostly in my mind as I have spoken. To them the exhilaration of beginning is an ever-present consciousness. Thank God life may be always so full of new beginnings that it never need

be stale to any of us. And before us all there always is the great beginning of the everlasting life to keep us always young. Aye, even to make us count ourselves as babes unborn. But to the young the sense of starting is the great prevailing sense of life. I wish that something I have said to-day might make you feel how noble and rich the opening of any life becomes when at the very gate it comes to agreement with God. It is a beautiful moment when with life before you, with your work before you, with your soul's salvation before you, you stand first with Him beside the gate and let Him, when He has agreed with you for a penny a day, send you into His vineyard. I dare to think that some of you are standing there with Him now ; that while I speak it is that moment, awful and glorious for some of you, in which, while those who sit beside you in the pew cannot guess at what is passing, you are giving yourself to Him and taking Him to be yours for all your life. If it is so, may He make the consecration perfect and keep you always faithful with His great surrounding love !

II.

THE TARES AND THE WHEAT.

"But he said, 'Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest.'"—MATTHEW xiii. 29.

No parable of Jesus more than the Parable of the Tares gives us His general view of human life. In it the everlasting problems lie in the sunshine of His celestial wisdom. Just think what there is in it. First, the ownership of the field, that which lies behind and surrounds and pervades all of Christ's thought and teaching, the fact that everything belongs to God, exists in Him, and nothing can take place outside of His Fatherhood. That is always the great elemental truth to Jesus. You lose the key and soul of all His teaching if you lose that. Then comes the sowing of the seed. Then the enemy's interference, the sowing of the tares. The actual condition of the world is reached—evil and good, good and evil, mingled and confused together. And then the appeal of the servants to the master, "Wilt thou that we go and gather them up?" How natural that is! How instantly we recognize this quick impatience to get rid of the evil of the

world instantly. We cannot think that the master looked at his eager servants disapprovingly, although he could not let them do what they wanted to do. The man who never wanted it would be but a poor kind of man. He whose heart has never burned within him to do one great thing which should break the chain which binds the world's sin to the world, and let the great black mass fall into the bottomless pit forever; he who has never longed for one sublime and final act of self-sacrifice which might unravel the twisted cords of evil in his own soul and set it free; he who has never known these great desires has lived but a meagre life. There are times when it all seems so possible, so easy. Wilt thou that we go and gather them up? We feel a certain chivalrous spirit in the words. It is the young knight's confidence in his good cause and his strong arm. It is the grasp of the victory before the first sword-stroke has been given. Let us ride out this bright morning and settle this troublesome business once for all.

Christ loves that spirit we must certainly believe. When He puts out His hand in hindrance and says No! it is not that He is displeased. "Nay," He says, "it may not be," but yet He blesses and approves the men who want to do it. And then He proceeds to teach these men how much more difficult and deeper is the task than they thought, and to claim their enthusiasm for the harder duty of patience and delay.

How had Christ learned the world's wickedness and the inveteracy of its sin? We talk about the need of experience. You shake your head over the

innocent man, who has kept his life pure and bright, and you say, "O, if he knew as I know how bad life is, what men are doing in the vile places of the earth." The eager revivalist, hungry for men's souls, wanting to make men understand that he knows whereof he speaks, abounds in hints and suggestions of the depths of vileness out of which he has come to Christ and pardon. Where did Christ learn the awfulness of sin? It came to Him out of His knowledge of the human heart and out of His infinite pity for the men whom sin was cursing with its power. Can you not imagine that a thoughtful man looking at a steam-engine and seeing its enormous power might picture to himself, though he had never seen it, the fearful havoc which that strength must make when in the midst of storm and darkness it should go plunging from the track and hurl itself down the embankment? And can you not imagine that the very sense in which His own perfectness of what a perfect man might be must have made Jesus feel the dreadfulness of everything which hindered that perfection as no other human being ever has, because no other human being ever has been perfect? These are the elements of Christ's knowledge of sin. This kind of knowledge of the world's wickedness must be ever deeper and deeper in every Christ-like man, for it depends not on how wicked the man has been himself, but on how pure he is and how deeply he longs for the goodness of his fellow-man.

However it has come about there is in Christ the deepest knowledge of the sin of man. I do not

know that anybody ever doubted that. I do not know that among all the strange things which have been said and written about Christ, anybody has been ever moved to portray Him as an amiable optimist who thought the world was perfect and never caught sight of those abysses of iniquity with which the history of mankind and of the single soul is rent and torn. If that had been the impression which He made upon the world He never could have been the world's Saviour. What would the souls of men have had to do with Him, if, when they came up to Him, they had seen nothing deeper in His face than mere complacency? How they would have turned away from Him. "Let easy innocence find comfort in His presence. He can be no Saviour for our souls," men would have said. There would have been a strange feeling of respect which could hardly have kept clear of suspicion as they saw His unsympathetic presence move among them. Can you not almost see the scene in Jerusalem, when this man, perfectly sinless, and perfectly unaware of sin, walked through the crowds, in the temple, on the streets. I can see men rebuked by Him, hiding their faces from Him. I can almost picture a strong young man hurrying away from the sight of Him to suicide, smitten to the heart with the horror of his deed of sin. I can see pride paling before Him as it meets the fire of the absolute standard. All this I see, but not the picture which the Gospels show, not men and women in their sin crowding around Him, clutching at His garment, finding His face full of hope, seeing new life open

before them as they gave themselves to His service. That sight—and that has been the sight not only of the Gospel pages, but of Christendom—could not be possible except under the power of the presence of one who the sinner was sure knew his sin more deeply and counted its awfulness more awful than the sinner did himself.

But we must go farther. It is not merely the sinfulness of man which is well known to Christ. It is also the mixture of man's sinfulness with his goodness. That is what the parable of the tares deals with. And that any being must know who really knows man. Simply to know that man is wicked is not enough. That makes it very easy, to be sure, and simplifies the whole problem of man's moral life. But to know that the world and man are both evil and good, and that their evil and their good are subtly mingled with each other, that is the really real knowledge which he must start with who would deal wisely with the world or man.

That mingling of the evil and the good deepens and grows more intimate the more we study it. First, it is merely that bad men and good men are living together side by side. There are no regions of saints and regions of sinners with great gulfs between them. You cannot judge any man by where you find him. The pure and vile, the brave and cowardly, the false and true are all confused and mixed together. But that is only the beginning. Not merely every crowd but every man is all confusion. No man can absolutely characterize his neighbor. No man can absolutely characterize him-

self. Every man is good. Every man is bad. You think that you have found your field of wheat, your perfect man ; but, lo, as soon as you have known him, or, still more, as soon as he has opened to you his knowledge of himself,—there are the tares, harsh, hard, unfruitful in the very midst of the golden plenty. You think that you have found your worthless field of weeds, your absolutely good-for-nothing man and, just as you are ready to give it to the fire, behold there comes the yellow wheat in the very heart of the green tares to startle you. Nor is this all. Not only in the same man but even in the same deed the good and evil are commingled. "At least this act," you say, " is pure and simple." But when you get below the form of the action to that which is really it, its spirit and its motive, behold there is the same confusion there. The act of benevolence flecked and stained with pride; the self-restraint which has some self-indulgence at its heart, truth told for false purposes, religion with some soul of selfishness. No smallest garden where the wheat and tares do not crowd and twist in with one another. No purification so complete that something does not linger to show that this special act is still a poor man's act with all the mixture in it of his human infirmity and sin.

All this Christ knows. And then, besides His knowledge of it, the parable of the tares tells us something else—which is that He is hopeful about it, that He declares that this state of sin and confusion is not the final thing. We shall see in a few moments what is the prophecy which He makes

with regard to the time and way of the solution; but now the point is that He makes a prophecy. He declares that the time is to come when the tares are to be plucked out and the wheat is to be left alone, when evil is to be extirpated and good remain. Is not this the first thing we wish to know about any man who undertakes to deal with the mixture of right and wrong? Does he believe in, is he sure of, the ultimate triumph of the right, the ultimate destruction of the wrong? If he does not, then how dreary grow his lamentations. Christ does! He is so sure of it; it is so utterly taken for granted in everything He says, that we cannot find a direct statement of it, but the whole parable glows with a certainty at the end—the certainty of the harvest gathered clean of tares, pure and precious into the great master's barn.

With such a certainty as this filling His soul there can be no such thing as compromise with sin. Compromise comes from the belief that sin cannot be conquered. A man who is convinced not merely that things are wrong but that they always must be wrong, is ready to make a bargain with the inevitable wickedness. "What is the use of standing out for an impossibility? Let us make the best terms we can. Let us fix a line of modified goodness, of mitigated wickedness, and live up to that." But he who hopes and believes in the ultimate conquest and overthrow of all wickedness will have nothing to do with such arrangements. He defies the yet unconquered sin and prophesies its downfall. He says to the towering, arrogant iniquity of the world

about him, "You are weak, however strong you seem. I have no bargain to make with you. Sometime I shall see you perish." He says to the sin in his own heart, "You are not I, some day you, the intruder, shall be cast out, and then the true I will appear."

This was the uncompromising absoluteness of Jesus. It came from His certain foresight of the victory of goodness over wickedness. He knew that it would come. As certainly as if He saw it here already He knew that it would come. What use for Him to make treaties with a citadel which to-morrow was to surrender without conditions, and to be His to level with the dust.

My dear friend, get a certainty like Christ's and you will have an uncompromising courage such as His. Thoroughly believe that the Church is certainly bound to be spiritual, and the state to be magnanimous, and society to be pure, and you are armed—or, what is better than being armed, you are inspired against the unspirituality of the Church and the sordidness of the state and the impurity of social life. This is salvation by faith. Thoroughly believe that the day shall come when these lusts and falsehoods and meannesses of yours shall be completely cast out and destroyed, and you cannot make any base treaty with them such as you are making now—that they shall have so much of your life to themselves if they will leave the rest untouched. You cannot sign a treaty of submission to your tyrant to-day if you believe that you are going to be free to-morrow.

"To-morrow!" you say; "yes, if it only were to-morrow—but it is so very far away. Even if I do believe that it is coming, it is so very far away. I must make my terms with the enemy meanwhile, while we must live together waiting for the end of things." And then the parable of the tares comes in, and it appears as if that part of it which I have quoted for my text at first sight taught this very compromise which we reject. But it does not. The master of the field asserts the necessity of time. He says that the tares are not to be torn out at once, but (here is the point) he does not for an instant let the tares and wheat become confused with one another, and he makes the day of their certain separation shine just as clearly in his picture as the interval in which they are to go on growing side by side.

For every process must proceed according to the nature of the things which are involved in it. If I am going to drive a nail into a piece of wood, a single strong blow of the hammer drives it home, but if I am going to set a tree into the soil, I cannot do it in an instant. Only as the slow vital processes, the reactions between the root and the ground begin and advance, so only can the tree really occupy the ground and be taken possession of by it. If I am going to get a superficial habit of action out of a man's life, a single strong blast of scorn or persuasion may blow it away, but if I am to set right the perversion of a man's soul, to extract from a man's soul the poison which has seated itself there, nothing but the long sunshine of the grace of God, bringing His healthiness with it, can do the work. In

proportion to the seriousness and intricacy of the disorder must be the length and patience of the cure.

Here is the danger of all those prompt and furious attacks on sin which shake a great community, and eagerly demand the instant fulness of the new life in the converted soul. They are very captivating. They appeal to a noble impatience in us, we cannot help knowing his simple faith, his passionate enthusiasm when the revival preacher stands with glowing face and cries out for the immediate purification of the world, the immediate perfect holiness of the soul. We gladly count him a thousand times more noble and more reasonable than the calm, sophistical philosopher who reconciles himself to sin as a necessity and only dreams of some far-off celestial revolution which on the fields of another life shall shake man and his sin asunder. But the danger of it all lies here. Lest men, full of the passion of immediateness, shall think not merely that the great blessed process is to be begun but that it also is to be finished, here and now. The danger is that the converted man shall think the new life perfect in him—and what then? By and by one or the other of two results is apt to come. Either, in order to keep his belief that the new life is actually perfect in him, the man has to bring down his notion of the new life and make it match the thing he actually is, or else, finding, more honestly, how far he is from its perfection, how full he is of weakness and of sin, he thinks because it is not perfect that it is not there at all, and so gives up in hopelessness.

Far be it from me in any way to disparage the noble work of the revivalist. Great is the man who in entire freedom from self-assertion, stands up in the midst of a community like this, all saturated with self-conceit and satisfaction, and asserts the awful presence of sin and bids men, here, now, while he speaks, while the air thrills with repentance and petition, give themselves to God and begin another life. I cannot begin to say how sad, in one sense how contemptible, appears to me the criticism of such men glibly and flippantly bestowed by other men who never have known what it is to be bowed down, to sigh and cry for the iniquities and abominations and miseries of their own lives and their brethren's ; but just because I honor him, I long to see the people whom he touches feel what it is that must be done, what alone it is that can be done here in this intense and earnest meeting, or there in that still, solemn chamber whither the penitent goes to confess his sins and give his soul to God. Glorious, at first sight, it would seem to be if there the man could cast himself down just as he is, with all his sins upon him, before a present Saviour standing there with the very nail-prints in his hands and feet, and then rise up not only forgiven for his sin but absolutely stripped and freed of it forever. More glorious, as we know man's nature better, does it come by and by to appear that out of those doors of blessing the man should come forgiven, hating his sin, full of hope, full of the certainty of the day when he shall be free of it forever; but, for the present, vowed and consecrated to a struggle with

it which is to go on until he dies. Soberer is the face in which that resolution burns, not yet the angel's face which shone on Stephen when the stones came crashing which were to break down the wall of time and open up the fields of the immortal life. More like the face of Paul as he went on into Damascus, blind, feeling his way, still saying over and over, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" but yet calm and determined, past all chance of change, to live thenceforth the life by the faith of the Son of God. Sober and earnest and determined, rather than radiant and triumphant, is this new Christian's faith. His fight is still before him. The fields of the great future are thick with struggle. But the power is within him and the hope before him. Old things are passed away: all things have become new.

Now, the parable of the tares goes farther than the statement of this fact—the fact that prolonged struggle is necessary for spiritual triumph, that the victory over sin cannot be an instantaneous thing. It tells us why. It gives us a reason for this necessity. Let us see whether we can understand the reason and recognize it in ourselves. Jesus says, "Lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them." Behold, he says, if you were instantly to obliterate the chance of evil you would also injure the chance of good. Strange doctrine, so it seems at first, but not strange for more than the first moment to any one who really knows the nature and centralness of that great thing, the human will. The will is at the root of everything.

By the will alone is any action good or bad. An unwilled action has no moral character. No treatment of a man then must meddle with his will or do any mischief to that central seat of character. But the will changes not from without, save as it is touched by motives which enter into it and make part of itself. Its real motives and changes are from within. Any action from whatever source it came which did not act on man through his will, which treated him as a willess thing, would weaken his morality, would enfeeble it on every side, in its power of being good as well as in its power of being bad. And the desire to pluck out evil from a life by foreign force, without the life's consent first, even—which is what every desire of instantaneous perfection ultimately comes to—is therefore an injury done to the whole will power of the life, making it less capable of goodness as it becomes less capable of sin.

Let me not state it too abstractly and philosophically. Here is your child. Wrong as all children are, just because they are human creatures, how shall you set him right? Is not the whole problem of your education this—to educate the will and not to break it. Perhaps it might be easy with all the tremendous purchase of your parental power to break your child's will if you chose. But what have you got, then? A poor, spiritless, willess creature, incapable of good as he is incapable of evil, with nothing to contribute to either side of the great battle of humanity which is going on about him. A victim first and then a hindrance. That is not

what you want. To keep the will, to fill it with more and more life, but to make it so wise that it shall spend its strength in goodness—that is your true ambition as the trainer of your child. And when some friend, disheartened with your slowness comes to you and says, "Why do you not settle the whole matter once for all by breaking the child's will to pieces, and compelling obedience whether he wants to obey you or not?"—and you reply, "I cannot do that—obedience won in that way would not be obedience. To prevent badness so, would be to prevent goodness also." What is that conversation but the translation into household language of the old conversation of the farmer and his servants. "Wilt thou that we go and gather up the tares?" "Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares ye root up also the fruit with them."

This is the danger of all systems of salvation which are repressive and protective, and not stimulative and inspiring. They range all the way from the mediæval cloister to the most modern Protestant system of subduing the rebellious will under the terrors of the law of God. They all have this same fault. They all strive to make vice impossible by an expedient which, if it succeeded, would make virtue impossible as well. They all forget or ignore the truth that not to hinder wickedness but to create goodness is the real purpose of all moral culture—that the highest goodness in this state of existence necessarily includes the highest power of being bad. The most celestial existence stands in danger of the greatest fall. This is the meaning of the strange

picture of Lucifer, son of the morning, flung from heaven into the depths of darkness.

"Let both grow together." Those words, then, tell the story of man's present life. But they are not the last words of the parable. "Let both grow together until the harvest." Are not these just the final words we need. They bring in just the intimation which the verse requires. For they declare that however impossible now may be the separation of the evil and the good, however necessary it may be that they should go on thus inextricable, mingled with each other, that is not an everlasting necessity. The time will come when the good may shake itself free from the evil and go its way, unhindered, unendangered, with no prospect save of ever-ripening and increasing goodness forever. What would life be without such a promise? With such a promise who can exaggerate, who can describe the richness and significance of living? Do you ask me what life is to mean for you, my friend? "Can you tell me?" you say. And I answer that I think I can, because Christ has told us all in this great parable. Life is to mean for you one long struggle. You are to do right with the same powers with which you might do wrong. Never a holy deed that might not, if you chose that it should be so, be unholy. Your will is to be trained and strengthened by choosing to be good where it is perfectly possible for you to be bad. This is to go on year after year, year after year, till it has done in you a work which this, and nothing except this, can do, and then, not until then, shall come another

condition, which then, and not until then, shall be possible, in which struggle shall be over, and without a danger of wickedness you shall go on ripening in holiness in the unhindered sunshine of God forever. That is the harvest. "When will it come; must I wait till I am dead? Can it come only in Heaven?" It must be like all Heaven, O my friend, fully to be realized only in the perfect world, but capable of indefinite anticipation and approximation here. It shall come gradually, and not by one sudden flash and shock. More and more as the wheat ripens it must separate itself from the tares. More and more as the man does right in danger, he grows out of the danger of doing wrong, until, beyond the mystery of death, that which began this side of it becomes complete, and, garnered into the barns of God, the wheat knows no more of the tares forever.

Struggle until, through struggle, struggle is outgrown. Is there any nobler picture of life which a brave, strong, patient man could ask than that. That is what Christ offers in His parable. May He help us all to feel the beauty and inspiration of that life, and to attempt it and live it by His grace.

III.

THE MOTIVE OF RELIGION.

"Then Satan answered the Lord and said, Doth Job serve God for nought?"—Job i. 9.

This question has all of Satan's disposition in it. For Satan in the Bible is the slanderer. The essence of his wickedness seems always there to lie in his suspiciousness and his refusal to allow anybody any goodness. It is the spirit of simple comprehensive hatred. He hates God and he hates man. He grudges them to one another. He will not let God have satisfaction in man nor man have satisfaction in God if he can help it. He hates goodness and he hates the human soul. He would banish goodness from the earth and he would starve the human soul if he could.

We can recognize the true Satanic character of such a disposition. It is genuine, essential wickedness. It is distinctly different from the hot impetuosity of evil into which a soul is carried by some overwhelming provocation or by some apparent personal advantage. It is a hatred of goodness because it is good, and of man because he is man. We shudder at it; we say how terrible it is. And yet

the echoes of it are all around us. Happy is the man who has not felt the echo of it within him. The preference of evil rather than good. The choice of the worse construction of a man's life and action rather than the better. The dislike of thinking good where it is possible to think evil. These are the Satan tempers wherever they appear. And who has not seen them in the faces of men and women walking on our streets as well as in the subtle and malignant face which looks out from the great poem on the day when "the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord and Satan came also among them."

But Satan is very clever as well as very wicked, and so, while we denounce his slandering, each special slander may well seem worthy of our study. I am most foolish if I do not listen while my worst enemy abuses me to see if out of his abuse I may not catch some intimation of where my weakness lies and what my faults are. This is the blessing which may come to us from the men who abuse us. They may set us to thinking about ourselves. So we may listen while Satan slanders Job. The great arch-slanderer insists that Job's religion is selfishness. "Doth Job serve God for naught?" If Job in Uz had heard what Satan said "before the Lord," we can imagine that questions might have been started in his pious mind. "Was there then selfishness in his devoutness?" As he looked up and saw the vast abundance of his wealth, and knew in his soul that God had given him it all, must he not have asked himself, "Is it for this, then, that

I serve God ?" and may he not have almost rejoiced in the malignancy of Satan since it induced God to put to proof that which the pious soul was almost ready to suspect itself.

Then comes the wonderfully rich and subtle poem. The heart of Job is searched and opened and learns to know itself. Its motives are dissected and exposed. The man learns to know himself in all his weaknesses. He learns also to know himself in his essential loyalty and love to God. And at last the poem closes with the picture of a restored prosperity in which there could be no suspicion, and Job dies in the last verse, " old and full of days," sure that he served God for something more than flocks and herds, and offering the pattern of unselfish righteousness to all the ages.

The subject which the question of the slanderer suggests, then, is, " The Motive of Religion." For us, too, there comes the same question. We listen, and the Bible teems with promises. We look, and all experience holds up the prizes of life and says, " These shall belong to him who serves the Lord." Health, happiness, and good repute, nay, even, in the long run, prosperity and wealth are promised to, are given to, the man who lives uprightly and keeps his garments clean and his hands busy. The wicked man is threatened with disgrace and ruin. The idle apprentice sees himself in imagination behind iron bars. With many exceptions and suspensions, the rule is true that all things work together for God's children. It would be evident beforehand that, this being the case, the souls of earnest Christians should

come to questions with themselves and wonder what it was that really bound them to their faith. The more devout and earnest is the soul the more it often must be troubled. The question is not one that stays outside and is asked only by the captious Satan in the street. It finds its way within. Nay, very often it starts up within and feeds itself on the soul's best dispositions and desires. It haunts our struggles and enfeebles them. Surely it must be good for us to face such a question and give it its answer. This is what I shall try to do as I speak to you about the motive of religion.

And the first thing we say is this: that while Job's whole soul may revolt at the notion of his serving God for gain, he cannot escape from his perplexity by denying the fact, or by insisting that he shall get no gain out of serving God. The fact is that, in the long run and in the large view, prosperity and the service of God are bound together. That is the idea of life. That is what our sense of justice demands. And no man must deny that fact as it applies itself to his own life. It is not by burning his barns and killing his cattle that Job will get rid of his difficulties and answer the question of his motive in serving God.

It is remarkable to see how really the Bible has two classes of utterances. On the one hand it has such promises as those which I have just been quoting, which offer blessings to obedience and assure men that if they serve God they shall prosper. On the other hand there are such words as those of Jesus in which he frankly told his disciples that in the

world they should "have tribulation" in proportion as they belonged to him. It is very interesting to put these two sorts of utterances together and ask what will be the total impression which is the resultant in the mind of him who believes them both. No doubt he will decide that what they mean is the certainty that righteousness will come to happiness in the end, but will have to pass through much of suffering upon the way. And, if he be wise, the practical rule by which the man will try to live will be the forgetfulness of consequences altogether, the ceasing to think whether happiness or unhappiness is coming, and the pursuit of righteousness for its own sake, the being upright, brave and true, simply because uprightness, bravery, and truth are the only worthy conditions of a human soul. Great is the condition of a man who thus lets rewards take care of themselves, come if they will or fail to come, but goes on his way true to the truth simply because it is true, strongly loyal to the right for its pure righteousness.

I say this first to show that the whole question of the benefit of goodness is not a fundamental question. There is a power of goodness to hold men quite behind its benefit. He who is good in the highest way is as unwilling to talk about the benefit of goodness as about the benefit of friendship.

But, having said this, it is necessary that we should go on and see that as a fact goodness has its benefits and to recognize how helpful the right use of them may be in the development and training of a soul. We need not fear to use them. Jesus uses

them freely. All that we need is to understand how they may be rightly used; how a man may rejoice in all the blessings which come to him from serving God, and yet not have to own to himself that he serves God for hire.

The answer to the question, the solution of the difficulty, seems to me to lie in the way in which the whole thought of reward is capable of elevation and enlargement and the way in which, as it becomes elevated and enlarged, it sloughs off and casts aside the evils and dangers which belonged to it in its lower forms and becomes purer and purer and more and more capable of good, and good alone.

Where does such elevation and enlargement begin? Take first the idea of reward in its most palpable and simple form. Take it in its Old Testament form, wherein it promises the direct material recompense here and now of all the good things that men do. It has its beauty, but its beauty is of the most crude and primitive sort. It thinks of the outer and the inner world as if they were in perfect correspondence and answered immediately to each other. The field stands watching the faithful man, and when he does another faithful thing it praises him with a new wheat sheaf or a new olive tree. The faithful man sees in the multiplication of his cattle or the enlargement of his palace the direct and necessary testimony of his faithfulness. There is something very attractive because there is something very true in that idea. It makes the earth a unit. In the world in which it should be true without disturbance there must come to be a noble sense of

harmony and peace. Even half-true as it is here, the glimpses which we catch of its half-truth are full of fascination. But we can see also what its dangers are. We can see why it is good that here, while man is what man is now, it should be only half, and not altogether true. So immediate, so infallible, so correspondent then, would come the echo of blessing on the deed of duty, that echo and deed might well become confused in the soul of the duty-doer, and it might easily appear as if not the doing of the duty but the getting of the blessing were the final and important thing. The man himself, expecting the reward to fill immediately the hands out of which the tools had dropped might well hear his own heart saying to him, "Ah, you are well paid for what you do. Do you serve God for nought?"

2. We pass on to another motive, when we think of the Christian as looking for blessing not in this life but in the life beyond the grave. "I shall be happy in Heaven," says the servant of Christ; "I can wait. The glory and the bliss that are to be revealed are well worth waiting for. I can suffer for these few years, sure of the freedom from suffering which I am to have forever and ever." What multitudes of souls have fed upon this certainty. What multitudes are feeding on it now and gathering great strength and patience.

And we can see at once that this expectation of celestial reward has left behind much of the danger of the anticipation of reward to be received on earth. In the first place it never can be so distinct and definite. It cannot take clear concrete shapes to the

ambitious desires, like houses and lands and bags of money, and the visible, audible tokens of men's esteem. Being of necessity less sharp and distinct before the imagination, the prizes of the celestial life may well appear more spiritual and the terms of their attainment may seem less arbitrary, more essential. Thus they may be the means of higher and purer inspiration.

And then, again, there is the fact that they are far away and must be waited for. The goodness must be here and now. The crown of the goodness is not till by and by. Self-sacrifice to-day. But the recompense of self-sacrifice only when the grave is past and eternity begun. Evidently that sort of expectation has a power of spiritual education. It demands patience and hope. It compels the sacrifice of the seen and present for the unseen and future. It calls for faith, the trust in a promise where assurance must rest upon the perceived character of the promiser. There must be self-control and that communion with God which the child has with the father whom he perfectly trusts, but who withholds from him for a time the gifts which he will certainly bestow on him some day. These are great things for the soul to have. The discipline which gives these things to the soul is very rich and bountiful. It cannot be stigmatized as mercenary, and yet still it is a service for a personal reward. Still even of the expectant saint who stands in the midst of present sorrows and surrenders with his glowing face lifted and his eager eye fixed on the celestial joys,—even of him the question may be asked,

emptied of all its bitterness and jealousy, perhaps, but intrinsically the same question still, "Does he serve God for nought?" Who would not sacrifice much, yea everything, in these few years of time to be rewarded with a whole eternity of joy!

3. It is a great step forward which we take when we pass on to the next motive and come to character as the essential reward and true ambition of a noble life. For then we pass beyond all of what commonly are meant by consequences, and our thought is fixed upon intrinsic qualities as the true result and recompense of struggle after righteousness. "If I do these brave things I shall be brave." "If I resist this temptation to impurity I shall be pure." Bravery and purity as real possessions of the soul; as real, nay, far more real than houses and oxen and bags of gold—these make the new ambition. What has become, then, of the old question? Is it not clear that while it has not disappeared, has not ceased to be asked, it has been marvellously purified and refined? The asking of it now does not strike shame but sends the glow of joyous gratitude into the soul of the saint conscious of the lofty benefaction which he has received. "Do you serve God for nought?" "Do you not serve God for nought?" someone asks almost scornfully of the doer of righteousness, whose righteous life has brought poverty, and sickness, and friendlessness. "For nought?" comes back the answer, "surely not! For everything! He pays me in the richest coin and most abundantly. I cannot take into my hands and hold out for you to count, the prizes which He gives me. I cannot

even show you pledges and promises written in a book signed with His name, assuring me that they shall be mine upon some far-off day, but they are mine here and now. I am a better man—that is my reward for being good." Do you not see how question and answer are transfigured. Mounting up together into the heavenly world of character, they have shaken the dust and mist of the low earth off of their wings. Now let the soul number its gains and count its treasures. They are so fine that they refine the hands which count them. They cannot beget pride, for their whole soul and essence is humility. Still there is selfishness, self-love, but it is a love of such a deep self that it is a love also both of all goodness and of all who are seeking to be good. It tends to sympathy and not to rivalry. How far away it has come from the first craving for reward which sought for the recompense of a holy life in benefits which the ledger could count and the pocket could contain.

One great and striking fact about this gradual elevation of the reward of goodness is that the higher it becomes the easier it is to think of it as universal. The highest and most spiritual blessings are like fire. They lend themselves and multiply their flame from point to point without robbery or grudge. One does not have them less because his brother has them. He rather has them more. But the lower blessings are limited in quantity. They are not like fire, but like gold. The more one has the less there is for others. This always has appeared. Whenever the proper rewards of a religious life have

seemed to be houses and lands and cattle, there has always been, hovering about, the notion of a chosen people, a favorite selection of humanity to whom belonged the privilege of being holy and appropriating the rewards of holiness. Whenever character has seemed to be intrinsically, in itself, the recompense of righteousness, the clouds have rolled away and men have seen the vision of a whole human race doing the will of God and finding the fulfilment of its life in that obedience. It is a great token of the truth of any idea, that it claims universality, that men who look at it see at once that, if it were accepted as true, it would not be satisfied with offering its solution to some one small corner of the human problem, but would demand the privilege of offering its key to the whole. And this witness of itself, this motive of religion, which consists in the essential value of character, abundantly bears.

4. Have we yet reached the end? Is there a higher motive still? I think there is. A motive, or perhaps we ought to say a range of motives, which yet more completely casts aside and leaves behind the taint of mercenariness while it still presents a true prize to the uplifted eye of the struggler with his sins and the seeker for goodness. This range of motives is inspired by two ideas. One of these ideas is the honor which man by his holiness may render to God. The other is the help which man by his holiness may render to his fellow-man. You go to your Christian friend, your fellow-student, your fellow-merchant, your fellow-man. You say to him, "You are serving God." And he replies,

" Yes, certainly I am, and I am always trying to serve Him more and more "; and then you ask Satan's question, " Is it for nothing that you serve Him ? Do you serve God for nought ? " And he replies again, " O, no, He pays me bountifully." And then you say, " Tell me what does He give you." And the answer comes, " He gives me the privilege of honoring Him and helping my fellow-men." What then ? It may be that these rewards seem to be no reward to you. It may be that you look into his face as if you looked upon an idiot, and wondered what distortion of the mind could let him care for things like these. But none the less you see that he did care for them. They make for him a great enthusiasm. They are his " exceeding great reward." And if you let yourself go on and ask, not of him but of yourself, " Will that sort of reward lead to mercenariness ? " the only answer must be, " No ! " For behold here the last touch of selfishness has passed away. The man is not even asking whether he is becoming a better man. He is not thinking of Heaven. He is certainly not counting his bank stocks and his barns. He is intensely aware of God the absolutely glorious and man the actually needy. He is full of the healthy sense that glory ought to be manifested and need, ought, to be relieved. He believes that if he serves God both of these ends will in some way, in some degree, be brought about, and so he bends him to his work and knows, whether he can trace it in its detail or not, that God is more honored and man less miserable because of the life he lives.

Those who have never felt it cannot know how this great motive takes possession of a man. Think how it had possession of the Lord. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me and to finish His work." And at the last, "I have glorified Thee." "These whom thou gavest me I have kept." Think of the purpose of his coming which the angels sang, "Glory to God," etc. What shall we say of Jesus? "Did he serve God for nought?" Truly it was not comfort or wealth which repaid him. The foxes and the birds seemed, by that test, more the favorites of God than he. And though he looked forward with joy to the time when his weary work should be over and he should go to his Father's House, it was not as recompense that that eternal joy offered itself to him. And we do not know how far he dwelt consciously on his own growth and the fulfilment of his perfect nature. But this is beyond all doubt or question—that day by day he found the impulse and the reward of his work in the glory of his Father and the salvation of mankind. Was ever man held by his motive as Jesus was by His? It led Him directly to His cross, but He never hesitated or drew back. It was enough. Let us never call that a small, or a vague, or an impossible motive, which has made the pattern life of humanity—the life of the Son of Man!

These, then, are the advancing motives. These are the higher and higher, the purer and purer benefits which come to him who gives himself to God to be His servant. Do you not see now what I meant when I said that each higher and purer motive cast

off and left behind something of the quality of possible evil which had belonged to those below it? The loftiness insures the safety. It is not, of course, that the lower motive passes away. It is only put in its true place. The man who mounts so high that his controlling desire is to serve his fellowmen still thanks God that his most external life is filled with mercy, and that the world beyond the grave is bright with promises and that his soul is ripening under divine culture. All these are with him as desires and as gratitudes, but, dominating them all and giving each its true proportion, is this great dedication. And in its power the other motives keep their place and lose their danger.

Is there not here a glimpse, such as one delights to get, into the great future? The search for earthly happiness, the sense that happiness and goodness naturally and appropriately go together is never going to be eradicated from the life and soul of man. The craving for celestial bliss will always make one of the deepest passions of the heart which believes in eternity at all. The ambition for character must forever be the mainspring of much of the noblest of human action. But the first will be kept from running wild into a mere hunt for luxury, and the second from filling life with unreality and other worldliness, and the third from corrupting into morbid self-consciousness, only as they all are surrounded and commanded by the great unselfish wish to glorify God and to serve fellow-man. There is the only atmosphere in which the pursuit of wealth and the desire of heaven and the craving for

culture are kept healthy, sound, and true. There is the secret of a holy energy in the heart of which all a man's best activity finds place and stimulus. There is a reward of serving God which casts the taunt of Satan back into his face, or rather (shall we not say ?) which seizes it and carries it as a very flag of inspiration and of triumph.

"Dost thou serve God for nought?" O, no! His wages are unspeakable. Day by day (so the obedient soul replies), day by day I find in serving Him the privilege of ministering to His glory and of helping these children of His who are my brethren. Day by day the sufficiency of that reward grows manifest. It is enough. It is so much that all besides is either included in it or is made unnecessary. Without it, all other wages would be woefully unsatisfactory. To be rich, to go to heaven, even to be good, what would they be if I could not glorify God and help my fellow-men. No! I do not "serve God for nought." His reward not merely satisfies but overwhelms me with its richness.

With such attraction let us tempt our souls and the souls of our brethren. O taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man that trusteth in Him. Who will not come to such a service ? Who will not give his heart and life to such a God ?

IV.

UNSEEN SPIRITUAL HELPERS.

"And Elisha prayed and said, 'Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see.' And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."—2 KINGS vi. 17.

IT is an old Hebrew story. Many people are fond of exhorting ministers not to preach about the old Hebrews, to let the sins and virtues of the Israelites go, and to talk to the present century about its own affairs. No doubt the exhortation sometimes may be needed, but it is often very foolishly given. What we want is not to let the wonderful history of that ancient people go, but rather to study it far more deeply and wisely. We want to save our present life from being a poor extemporised thing by seeing how God was teaching lessons for this age of ours and for every age, centuries ago. Never was there a history in which God's working was so manifest, never was there a nation whose evil and whose good was so suggestive. Long may it be before ministers stop preaching and people stop thinking about the ancient Hebrews. It would be the closing of the sublimest leaves of the long human story. We cannot know how much flatter, vulgarer,

and tamer these halls of our common humanity would seem if they no longer felt the tread and echoed to the voices of the giants of the Old Testament—Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, Jeremiah.

Our story to-day is of Elisha. Let me recall it to you in its few facts, and then see what it means, and how it touches all our life. The king of Syria was making war upon the king of Israel, and the prophet Elisha knew and exposed his plans. The king sent out to capture and destroy the troublesome prophet. He sent a whole army, "horses and chariots and a great host," and they came by night and compassed the city about, and when the servant of the man of God was risen early and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, "Alas, my master, how shall we do?" And he answered, "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." And Elisha prayed, and said, "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

There is the story. Would it not be hard to lose its majestic simplicity, because it is a Hebrew story, and what it tells of happened long ago? What modern story will rise up and take its place?

And yet the essence of the story belongs to every time. That is exactly its value. See what it is. A young man believes in and follows the prophet of God. He stands by the cause of righteousness and

truth. He does not desert it when it is attacked. He sees the danger and he fears, but there is no sign that he wants to run away. "Alas, how shall I do?" he cries, with the great host of the enemy gathering about him and his master. He is in danger and he is in earnest. And then, a vision is given him. He sees what champions are gathered in the interests of truth. What seemed to be darkness and weakness becomes peopled with forms of light and strength, and the young man sees that his beset and persecuted life is really stronger than its persecutors, and takes courage and stands by to see his enemies struck with blindness and thrown into confusion.

There is in every young man's soul something which is to him what Elisha was to the young man of our story—something prophetic. The higher nature through some of its deep needs or lofty impulses is always trying to open the eyes of our lower and despondent nature to see the divine and hopeful powers which are at work upon our life. There is in all our temporariness and earthliness something which connects itself with eternity and the spiritual life. This is to the fearful and despondent part of us what the courageous prophet was to the terrified young man. In that conflict between hope and fear, between courage and despair, which is always going on within us when we undertake any great work and see its dangers, it seems to me as if we could hear the better and stronger part of us pleading with God for the worse and weaker part, as Elisha prayed for his young servant—"Lord, I

pray thee, open his eyes that he may see." And when I see the more spiritual and hopeful temper of a community or of the world always struggling with the blindness and fear that presses on it, again it seems as if the prophet were begging in behalf of the duller sight and lower life beside him. "Lord, open his eyes." If there be any discouragement in any good task, any fear at the sight of what a multitude of enemies beset every man's endeavor to do right, if there be dismay or disheartenment in any soul here, that still is determined to try to serve God (and I do not believe that you can get so many people together as there are here without having many such souls among them), to them I think the old Hebrew story speaks, and I should be very thankful if I could so unfold its meaning as to send them away with a little better hope and faith and courage.

Our subject, then, is this—the unseen spiritual helpers. What are the genuine realities that answer to the horses and chariots that the young man saw when his eyes were opened?

In the first and most general sense, then, I think that spiritual help comes to us when the tasks and duties of our life show us their real purposes and meanings. Each of us is engaged in doing something in this world, and here this morning, in the church's wide charity, we will suppose that everyone of us is trying to do faithfully his special work. There are school-boys and school-girls with their lessons, and men with their businesses, and men with their patients and their clients, fathers and

mothers with their children, church officers with their cares for the church—all of us with our various connections with one another that burst out everywhere with duties. And I do not suppose that any of us keep constantly in such sympathetic relation to our occupations that the form of our occupations does not often present itself to us as an enemy. It seems to be trying to crush us, the routine, the drudgery, the hardship of what we have to do; we feel our life slowly being pressed out of us by the hard tyranny of our work. And then what comes? The only thing that can defend us against the tyranny of the form is the power of the spirit of our work. If you had a business friend who seemed to you most in danger of being conquered by the form of his business life, as so many are, of being made mean and narrow and machine-like, how would you try to save him? Would you not feel sure that if you could make him feel the most sacred purposes of business life, such unselfish purposes, as charity, and the public weal, and the culture of character, you would have armed him against the lower influences of his trade most safely? These are the champions he needs. In every occupation which a man has any right to be engaged in in this world there is a spirit that underlies the form, and it is only by appealing to the protection of the spirit that we can truly strengthen ourselves against the despotisms of the form. We grow afraid, I think, of the form of everything we do, even our worship, so that the tongue falters at the formal prayer, for fear lest its act of reverence should be the most

irreverent. What shall we do in such a world of danger? And then, when the Lord opens our eyes to see the souls of these hard, formal things, and we discover how they are always trying to protect their servants from the oppression of formality, and so we take courage for our tasks again, is not that, over again, the blessed vision that the Lord showed to Elisha's servant when Elisha prayed? Is it not as if we saw horses and chariots upon the mountains stronger than the horses and chariots which we see here upon the plain? We learn that the spirit is stronger than the form, and we take courage. What prayer could his best friend ask for a young man, in the sordid dangers of this common life, than just this "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see always the spiritual meanings and purposes of the things thou givest him to do?" If that prayer is answered, he must go forth with a brave, protected soul.

But while this certainly is true, it is not the main thing; it would not come to much if there were not very much more behind it. When we speak of our spiritual helpers, we mean most of all those actually existent beings, those persons living a higher life than ours, whose life is capable of touching ours and aiding it, the knowledge of whose existence and whose readiness to help us makes us more brave to face the dangers that we meet with because we are not facing them alone. Of all such beings, whether there be only one or multitudes, who can be made known to us, one stands above all others, one stands eternally alone, because all others get whatever help they have

to give us primarily from Him; they are His instruments and ministers. That one is God. The true unveiling of the human eye, the true sight that gives courage to a human heart, is the sight of the Divine Father standing above all our struggling life, looking down into it with love, with pity, and ready to strike down our enemies the moment that they grow too strong for us. Get what support we may out of the essential dignity and spirituality of our work itself, still its great spiritual meaning must always be that it was given us to do by God our Father. That is its real beauty. That is its true glory. And so our first discovery of spiritual help was really only an anticipation of this, the great strength of a soul which comes to the sight of a father and knows that it is not fighting alone but God watches and works for it above. It is the bewildered soldier looking up out of the dust and smoke and blood, and seeing his captain standing calm and watchful up there where he can survey the whole field and manage the whole battle.

This is the wonder of the life of Jesus Christ. The incarnation was the close meeting of God and man. They had been struggling together. Man had been fitfully reaching out after God. God had been patiently offering himself to man from the beginning. In Jesus Christ they met. What was the issue? A perfectly strong and brave humanity! What made that humanity so brave and strong? Was it not this, that it was always seeing God? We think it strange that Jesus could stand so bravely before the Pharisees and the Romans and

feel no fear. Was it strange if His Father were closer to Him than Romans and Pharisees all the while and hid them from Him; if the trumpets and the chariots upon the mountain were so loud in His ears that He could not hear the clatter of the hosts upon the plain? Our Pharisees are so much nearer and clearer to us than our Father. The secret of courage is so simple after all. We do not fear the danger when we see the defence, so that courage—anything above the mere animal courage of the savage—is clear-sightedness. And yet men talk as if the belief in a protecting Father, a true God, were a mere matter for discussion and debate, and did not tell right home upon the strength and grace and happiness of every human life.

But let us be a little more definite. We say that "seeing God" is the source and secret of all true courage. What do we really mean by seeing God? As soon as we own that the sight of the bodily eyes is impossible, we own that there is a figurative element in the expression. Let us see what it is. To see God, then, I think, may be separated into these three elements. First, it is to recognize His character as the ruling law of the universe. The qualities of God we know. They are involved in our very conception of Him. He is righteous, just, loving, true, pure. Now when your eyes are opened, you see these divine principles running everywhere. All history is the story of their development; all life is hung upon them. Their imperiousness and loveliness appear on every side. You look down into every cleft of life and there they lie under all. You

look in through every shell of life, and there they work behind all. They are everywhere. God is everywhere. And seeing them you see God.

And, secondly, to see God is to see God's purposes in everything. The two are one in essence, but different in apprehension. But when the world opens to you as a plan of God, when all existence is vocal with His meanings, when His intentions thread the universe, so that he who reads human progress, in its largeness or its littleness, reads God's will; that, again, is seeing God.

And still more to see God is to be conscious of our own spiritual relations to Him, to know as a comfort and a motive that He loves us, to be surrounded with His companionship, to find that what we do depends not merely upon what He is but upon His being present with us; in a word, to love our Father with an active love—that is a life for which the devout soul finds no adequate description but that it is "seeing God."

This, then, is what we mean by "seeing God." It is to have the whole world as we think of it, as we live in it, full of His character, His purposes, and His love. Do we not understand, then, what we mean when we say that Jesus Christ in His incarnation was the prophet by whom such a sight of God became possible to men. He brought the righteousness of God and made it manifest, a clear fact where all men could read it. He laid it like a new silver light across the murky surfaces that we were all familiar with. He made the lives of fishermen and publicans the scaffolding on which He hung its ex-

hibition. And so, too, He made the purposes of God the great important lives along which all existence ran. He let us see that the course of the great nations and the current of quiet lives were all running the way that one supreme and omnipresent will had chosen. And of the love of God, what shall we say? He wove its records everywhere. He spun it in the color of the lily and made us hear it in the noiseless fall of the sparrow. He made all sorrow and all joy its ministers. And then at last He hung it on a cross so high that no pride could tower so high as to overlook it, so low that no most abject humility could fall so low as not to be within its light. This is what Jesus did. He did not bring God into the world. God forbid we should think that! God had never been out of the world He made and loved. He touched the world with His life and made it everywhere a luminous utterance of God. And then, what else? He opened the blind eyes of every man who would become His servant, and bid him see. He regenerated man. He brought him back, that is, into the first condition, lost so long, in which his eyes were open and he could see the God who was everywhere. "To as many as believed Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God." He redeemed man. He brought him back into the Eden of the perfect reconciliation. Once more he might see God. No longer with the eyes of sense but all the more clearly to the inner vision of the renewed obedient soul, the Lord God walked with man among the trees of the garden of the Christian life.

How else shall we explain the courage which is always coming to the weakest and most timid Christian hearts? We are here frightened and perplexed with the distresses and the enemies, the doubts and the disasters of our lives; we are beset on every side. And then we cry out to our master and our prophet, "What shall we do?" And He prays to His Father for us. "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see." He prays His own mediatorial prayer, "Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given me to be with me where I am, that they may see my glory which Thou hast given me." And then God does open our eyes and we see Him in Christ even as Christ sees Him, and the world cannot terrify us or make us afraid, for the Friend we see above is stronger and more real than the enemy we see below, and we rest in the satisfied knowledge of His righteousness and will and love, the satisfied sight of Him.

And now can we not go farther still when we are talking of our unseen spiritual helpers? We go with timid feet, not sure of the ground we walk on and yet sure that there is ground, and irresistibly impelled to feel for it and find it. We cannot separate ourselves from the great human conviction that beside the supreme personal life of God, which is the source of all existence, there are other spiritual beings, of many varying orders, who do His will, who help His children, and are the emanations of his life in other worlds as man is here in this grosser world of flesh and blood. The divine existence multiplies

itself. The company of spiritual beings who surround Him with their loyalty and love, the angels in countless orders sweeping upward from the ministers of man's lower wants up to those who stand nearest to the throne—all these in some belief or other have been included in the faith of every race of men, of almost every man, who had come to the knowledge of a spiritual world and trusted in a God. We must not rob ourselves of the strength and richness that the thought of their existence has to give.

What shall we say, for instance, of the beings whom the young man saw gathered in the mountain when his eyes were open? Were they flesh and blood warriors like the Syrian army camped there in the plain below? Were they mere ideas, visions that had no objective reality whatever, the mere pictures of a dream? If we had not become such Sadducees in our disbelief of spiritual existence, we should not find it hard to believe that it was neither of these but that with his newly-opened eyes he did indeed see beings of some higher spiritual order, who are always busy about this world of ours, only not visible to the dull senses of our ordinary life.

Certainly there is nothing clearer or more striking in the Bible than the calm, familiar way with which from end to end it assumes the present existence of a world of spiritual beings always close to and acting on this world of flesh and blood. It does not belong to any one part of the Bible. It runs throughout its whole vast range. From creation to judgment, the spiritual beings are forever present. They act as

truly in the drama as the men and women who with their unmistakable humanity walk the sacred stage in the successive scenes. There is nothing of hesitation about the Bible's treatment of the spiritual world. There is no reserve, no vagueness which would leave a chance for the whole system to be explained away into dreams and metaphors. The spiritual world with all its multitudinous existence is just as real as the crowded cities, and the fragrant fields and the loud battle-grounds of the visible and palpable Judea in which the writers of the sacred books were living. You take away the unseen world with all its unseen actors from the story, and you have not merely made the Bible like other books, you have set it below other books, for you have taken the color out of all its life, the motive out of all its action.

But then the Bible goes farther. It not merely believes in and everywhere assumes the existence of spiritual beings. It believes that to certain conditions even of our fleshly humanity these beings become visible. There is an opening of the eyes that lets us see what is going on in this finer, purer region round about us all the time. Is not this the idea of life that the Bible gives us, as if we were blind men walking in the midst of a great city, hearing its noise, feeling its jostling, and now and then in some peculiar moments of our life opening our eyes, catching one sudden flash of the movement that is going on around us and then shutting them again and taking the moment's sight back with us into the darkness, to ponder over, and too often, by and by, to

come to doubt about whether we really saw it. So here and there an eye is opened. A man or woman in the Bible is found in fit condition and to that deeper sense it is recorded that spiritual beings made themselves visible, as if it were no stranger thing than for the opened eye of the flesh to see the sparkling splendor of the Temple and the Mount of Olives and the high priest walking down the street, and all the familiar scenery of Jerusalem. The Hebrew maiden is about her pure and simple life in Nazareth, and she opens her eyes and sees the messenger who hails her as the highly favored of her Lord; the shepherds are watching in the fields and suddenly they see the angels as truly and as clearly as they see the stars. The women go to the sepulchre and there sit the ministers beside the place where Jesus lay. Paul rides towards Damascus, and lo! he has fallen from his horse and hears a voice which is intelligible to him alone. What shall we say? There is no doubt of what the Bible teaches, and it is what the human heart, taught by God through its own deepest instincts, has always guessed at and believed, that this world of fleshly life is not all, that everywhere there is a realm of spiritual life close to us, and that there is an inner sense to which, when it is wakened, these spiritual beings have often been actually visible and given words of cheer and guidance and encouragement to toiling and discouraged men.

Can we believe anything like that? I am sure as we portray its possibility, we have some sense of more enlargement and richness in the universe, at

least in our universe, in what concerns our life. The narrow walls of the moral life are rolled back and there is more room to act, more space to breathe. The world of the Bible opens with its vast waves of motive coming in like the breath of the morning out of the regions of the unseen. The difference between the Bible with its tides of spiritual life and the modern novel with its narrow studies of human character and action as if they were the highest things in the universe, this difference describes the dignity of a belief in living spiritual influences as contrasted with the low and unenterprising Sadduceeism to which our souls incline.

But can we believe anything like that? Have men ever really seen and talked with beings of a different sort from ours, with spiritual persons belonging to a spiritual region that is always existing though ordinarily unseen? May not they have been mistaken and thought that they were talking with spirits when they really were only talking with themselves? That multitudes of people have made just that mistake there cannot be a shadow of doubt. Of course the spirit-seeing faculty, whatever it is, may be deluded just as the outward eye may be mistaken and think it sees colors when it is only sensitive to some excitement wholly within itself. It is not necessary to credit every ghost-story simply because we know that the dead have been seen by the living; that Peter and James and John did indeed see Moses and Elias on the Mountain of Transfiguration. But one such certain story does break open the seeming impossibility. It does put us where

(with all the rareness that we may feel belongs to such conditions)—none of us can venture to say that never again shall mortal eye look on the forms of immortality or mortal ear listen to words uttered from the lips of spiritual beings who have passed out of these lower regions by the door of death. But that is not the chief thing that it gives us. That is not the blessing that we value, such very vague expectation of an uttered word out of or a clear sight into the world of spirits. A true acceptance of the whole Bible idea of ever-present spiritual life would not set us to watching for the apparitions of the dead or for the sight of angels, but it would give us the strength which comes to every work and suffering from the knowledge that this universe is larger than it seems and that it is all peopled with spiritual existences who are God's ministers to enlighten and to feed our life. The consciousness of many spiritual helpers must come although they are not shown to us in any vision. Enough that men have looked and seen through some break in the cloud the comforting, defending spirits who are doing the will of God in man's behalf. The brave man need not see any celestial form with spear and helmet by his side, yet he may know as he goes out to the battle that the spirits of justice everywhere are sympathising with him and helping him in unknown ways. The mother may not discern an angel bending over the bed on which her child is laid, but still she may know that there are other watchers by its bed beside herself, spirits whom God has sent to see that none of his little ones take any harm. The

soul in its bereavement may not look to see here again the very presence and features of the friend whom God has taken, yet still may be sure that even now companionship with that dead but living friend is something more and richer than merely memory of what he was or anticipation of the reunion in some far-off time; that even now, in such unknown ways as soul may present itself to soul, his friend is with him, for encouragement and strength.

Such helps as these the knowledge that there is a world of spiritual beings interested in and busied about the things that concern us in this world of time may give us. And I cannot but think that it will change our whole idea of death. Surrounded by this spiritual life and yet seeing it only here and there through broken gaps of this enveloping mortality, what will it be for us to die? Only to cast this mortality away and stand face to face with the realities that have been close to us all the while. All that has mocked us with half glimpses, all that has flashed before our eyes and darkened again so suddenly that we have hardly dared to remember that we saw it, all that has haunted our hopes and clung to us in spite of the cold Sadducee contemptuousness of the world—all this real to us, the only reality, permanent and real forever. All spiritual companionship, all unknown spiritual protection that has been blessing us in the darkness opened suddenly into the light so that we see it all and enter on the new life that begins with death. Death, then, is the enlightener. It opens the eyes

to see the things that are. It is not the carrying of the soul away to some island-planet or some unfound place beyond the sun. Whatever be its mystery of place (and that we cannot know till we know something of what place means to the disembodied spirit), the essential thing concerning death must be that it opens the closed eyes, draws down the veil of blinding mortality and lets the man see spiritual things. This seems to me to change the question that we ask about dying, and make it so much deeper and truer. It is no longer where shall I go when I am dead ? but, what shall I be ? And so character and the power of higher vision and higher education instead of circumstances, condition, and locality become our study for this life and our ambition for the life to come.

And now have we not come to this, that there are two ways to fight the great battle of life—two different kinds of fighters? One man fights in the light, another in the darkness. One man is always cognizant of the principles of the work he is engaged in, always conscious of God and of the ministries that God employs to bless and influence his life. Whenever he is afraid these presences rise up to reassure him. Whenever the cause looks desperate he turns to the mountain and there are these hosts of the spiritual life. The other man knows nothing of it all; he fights a despairing battle; his heart is full of fear. Tell me, which is the safest, which is the strongest life? I do not say that the man who does not see these higher things is all the same as if they

did not exist. I am sure that God and His angels help many a struggler who does not know where the help comes from. But when we see so many men cowards who ought to be brave, so many discouraged who ought to be jubilant and certain of success, when we know what a life all these men might be living if they only really saw these things—who will not pray for every brother, "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see"? Who will not go far and wide telling his brethren of the great things God has to show them? We are not asking God to make a spiritual world for us, only to let us see it as it is. We do not pray God to love us, but we do pray that we may so see His love that we shall love Him back again and be saved by loving.

Be your own prophet and pray it for yourself. Let your highest needs plead with God to enlighten your lower nature, as Elisha plead for his servant. Pray for yourself, "Lord, that I might receive my sight!"

For there are better things to see if you can only see them. And the reason that you do not see them now is not that God hides them, but that our eyes are blind. Let us cry after Christ the Revealer, as Bartimeus cried after Him at Jericho, and He will stop and speak to us, no matter who remonstrates. "Receive thy sight, thy faith hath saved thee," He will say, and we shall begin to see the higher and the deeper things, and to take courage and be strong. We shall enter on that path of the just which is as a shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

V.

HEAVENLY WISDOM.

"I said I will be wise: but it was far from me."—ECCLESIASTES vii. 23.

THE writer of the book of Ecclesiastes calls himself in our English version "The Preacher." It would be a more accurate translation if he were called the Ponderer or the Debater. His book is a discussion of the deepest things of life, all grouped around and centering upon his personal experience. In this verse he looks back and remembers. He is perhaps an old man as he writes and the days of his long-past youth come back to him. He remembers how bravely he set out in the search after wisdom. "I said I will be wise"; and then how sadly comes in the brief and summary record of the disappointment, "but it was far from me."

How easy the struggle, which afterward ended in failure, had evidently seemed to the young soul when it was undertaken. "I said I will be wise." There is an almost jaunty air about the words. It is as if he were talking of a holiday excursion, something that could be carried through with flying flags and untorn clothes, as if the eye saw the prize hang-

ing close by it there upon the goal and started out to win it with a few quick steps. "I will be wise." We almost see the hand grasping the garland of wisdom as he speaks. And then behold! all changes. The prize draws away. It becomes distant and more distant the longer that he reaches for it. "It was far from me." Until at last he hardly can believe that he is the same man who once set out so bravely.

And yet how good he must have felt it to be for all his life that there had once been a time in his life when he had felt it easy to be wise. Will you take your youth, all afire with some great wish, all keen to run the race of life, and bid him sit down by your side while you tell him in full just what he will have to meet before he comes to the goal. That were the cruellest and most foolish wisdom. It is a blessed thing that at the start the world looks easy. If it were not so who would dare to begin. The parable indeed bids the man who is about to build to count the cost. It is warning against one kind of danger, but the man who is in business and the man who is in life knows that there is another kind of danger which is no less fatal to success. He who begins without counting the cost comes to sorrow, but he who insists on having every dollar in his hand before he starts never begins. The real counting of the cost which the young man makes is in the feeling of power, in the leap of blood within his veins. That tells him life is easy. If he could keep that, elevating it and toughening it with the accumulations of experience, life would

be easy to the end. As it is, a very great deal of life gets done before the man finds out that life is hard. A good start in the race is run before the man begins to faint because he sees the course is long. Alas for any of us if behind the weary, anxious, half-discouraged struggles after wisdom which have filled our life there did not lie the memory of a bright time when we easily said to ourselves, "I will be wise," as if we were going to do it before night.

Another thing which strikes us about this wish of Ecclesiastes is, what an old wish it is. There are some desires of mankind which are like the old countries of the world. No man can step ashore in Greece or Egypt or India without feeling how old is the atmosphere he breathes and the soil on which he treads. It has seen so much of human history. It has felt the beating of such generations of human hearts, this ancient land, this venerable home of men. Sometimes it weighs oppressively upon us and it seems as if we could not breathe the heavy much-breathed air. Sometimes the whole land is mellowed by its long antiquity and life seems a richer and a deeper thing there than in our newer lands. So it is with the old desires of mankind; for instance this desire of wisdom. When we think how many men, how many centuries of men have desired that desire, sometimes it makes our hearts sink with the sense of how hopeless it all is. Sometimes it makes our hearts glow with the delight of sharing in the wish which all the noblest of our race have felt. In either way it deepens the act of wishing and makes

it a more solemn and pathetic thing. It would be a great thing for a man to find himself wishing for something which he was perfectly sure that no man had ever wished before. It would have all the exhilaration of pressing forward into a new discovered and untrodden country. Columbus-like he would feel the whole new world before him. But to know that our wish must have been wished in his own way, in his own degree, by every man that ever lived, that no man ever grew to man's estate who did not seek somehow this thing which we are seeking; that, if we are truly human, makes our search far more rich and attractive. It surrounds us with the accumulated enthusiasm of mankind. It knits us into human sympathy. It makes us love the very dangers of the way. It lets us feel that we are seeking not a mere selfish triumph, but that we are making our little contribution to what when it is gained will be the triumph of mankind. Something of this sort we can feel in all the best seekers after wisdom.

There is another thought which rises in our minds when we see a new man stand up and hear him say, "I will be wise!" and think how many men have wished the same before, and how every one of them in large degree has failed of what he wished. "What is the relations" we ask, "between a wish in a man's soul and the reality of things?" That there is some such relation men have always felt. The human soul has always seemed to be such a mirror of the world, that all which men have found firmly and constantly depicted in the wishes of the

human soul they have felt sure must have a fact corresponding to it in the universe of reality. The strong and almost universal craving of man for immortality has always been taken to constitute a true part of the evidence that man really is immortal. The belief of man in God has always helped to prove to men that God exists. Of course we know that "the wish is father to the thought," and we compel ourselves to be upon our guard against the disposition to believe that a thing is true merely because we and other people wish it were. Our human desire, before it can seem to be evidence of the existence of that which it desires, must be very wide and very unprejudiced by selfishness. Because one century has believed that there must be some way of turning all metals into gold or of reading in the stars the fates of men, that does not show that both of those ideas are not delusions. But when all men, in every age, in every land, in every faith, turn with one common wish one way, not for immediate and palpable advantage, but with an instinctive movement of their natures, the conviction is irresistible that there must be something there which draws them. There must be an external fact to which this internal movement corresponds. Where all the needles turn there must be a pole.

This becomes very impressive when we apply it to the universal and eternal quest of man for wisdom. Somewhere there must be this wisdom which the human mind has always sought. Misconceived, distorted in its reflection in the mirror though it be, still there is a true wisdom somewhere which the mind

of man has always sought. The final knowledge and character of man when they are reached are the resultant of the eternal wisdom which has come down from above and been accepted into this nature made to receive it. Not wisdom alone. That were too cold and hard and distant. Not the soul alone. That were too private and personal and sentimental. But the soul strong with wisdom. Wisdom warm in the soul, this is the dream that has always haunted men's wishes and made them forever repeat, in spite of every disappointment, the old resolve, " I will be wise! "

But it is time for us to turn and ask more carefully just what is meant by wisdom for which the search is so inveterate and universal. If we can have that clear in our minds we shall be able to understand better the search and its chances of success. Wisdom, then, in general signifies all knowledge and the intelligent grasp of truth. But there is a special meaning of wisdom, and it is very common in the use of the Bible, in which the word signifies the apprehension of some great universal principle which underlies all things, governs all things, and by which all things are accounted for. We all know how deep the craving for such a great principle is. The physicist seeks for it in nature. He tries to find some one great ruling law which shall comprehend all the movements of natural forces and give them unity. The metaphysician seeks for it in man's constitution. He tries to find some first principle which shall harmonize and explain the contradictions and inconsistencies of this mysterious being, man. The

thoughtful observer of his own life seeks for it there, and is not satisfied unless he can discern around all the hundred little motives which decide his daily actions some one great motive, out of which they all are fed, around all the miscellaneous force, some one great force of definite character which identifies his individuality and makes him the man he is.

It is the desire for the perception of some such first great principle or principles of things which really constitutes man's search for wisdom. It has always had, and always must have, strong fascination for the human mind. All acquaintance with the details of things, however perfect, must be unsatisfactory without this larger understanding. It is the absence of this which the singer in Tennyson's poem is lamenting when he cries that "knowledge comes but wisdom lingers," the absence of any insight which shall explain the world and so secure its best use.

Now wisdom in this sense is what all earnest and intelligent young spirits crave, more or less consciously, at the beginning of their lives. "What does it all mean? Where is the clue to it? Where is the sacred, the mysterious word before the speaking of which the closed heart of things shall fly open and the secret of life be shown? I will not rest till I have found it. I will seek everywhere and try all manner of experiments till it is found. I will have wisdom. I will be wise!" To very many men's recollection that resolution stands back at the beginning of what seems to have been a very long career. It was clear and enthusiastic. Was it not

just exactly the resolution of Ecclesiastes? And what has come since? If in the course of years the incongruities and the complexities of life, the moral disappointments, the failures of our theories about people, the fading away of our hopes about ourselves, have altogether made us give up the search for any such grasp of life; if, gradually seeming more and more difficult to find, it has at last come to seem impossible for us to find any such governing and accounting principle for life—and so we have settled down to the details of living, to doing such particular act by itself and not as part of any long coherent plan, not inspired by any one consistent hope, if this has been our history—why it seems to me that we might search all literature and join words together in a thousand ways and we could not find or make a more complete description of our lives than that which is in these few short words of Ecclesiastes, "I said I will be wise, but it was far from me."

I hope that I make clear the difference between two lives, one of which is still inspired by, and the other of which has abandoned, the search for wisdom. Behold how different they are. One has a fire in its eye, a spring in every movement. Each special act is freed from anxious questioning, is almost unconscious, because it is absorbed in and is decided by the larger purpose of the life. Where the next footstep shall be set is settled not by the choice of softest ground or greenest grass to tread on, but by the direction in which lies the life's recognized and beckoning goal. The

least things become lofty; the worst disappointments may be revelations so long as the man is saying "I will be wise." When that is done, when the man has begun to say "It is far from me," then everything falls to pieces. Each bit of life has to be valued by itself, and oh, how valuable it comes to look. Yesterday's fact, to-day's frolic, to-morrow's bargain—what are they worth except as mere beguilements of the hour? We give them artificial values. We fill the search for them with the spirit of rivalry to keep its interest alive. Each day has to begin all over again. Our life has no flow. It lies in ponds and is not like a river. And, worst of all, we grow distrustful and scornful about other men who still think that life has a meaning when we have once ceased to seek the meaning of our own. We are ready to say "There is no wisdom," when we have stopped saying "I will be wise."

And what then? Somehow or other evidently this discouragement must get new courage, and the abandoned search must be taken up again. How shall it be? I have not spoken thus far of religion. I have purposely talked as if there were no such thing as religion in the world. The search for wisdom, as I have spoken of it, is the search for abstract principles, for a plan to be discerned in the structure of the universe, in the nature of things. That is all scientific, not religious. Now when that fails us, or before that fails us, for we would not talk of religion as if it were a mere last resort, when science fails us, or before it fails us, we turn to religion. Religion means God. It can mean nothing less, nothing else

than that. Religion cannot be made abstract. It must be personal. Religion means God. When a man becomes religious, it is just this. He puts God before and under and around his life. How cold and weak that sounds! When a man becomes religious he feels the God who has been always before and under and around his life, and gives himself in conscious and obedient relationship to Him. Do you not see then what must come? The first principle of that man's life comes to be God. Instead of looking for a philosophy, a statement, a law which will comprehend and harmonize his life, now he looks for a person, for God. Instead of making wisdom simply an understanding of something which can be discovered by the perceptions or reasoned out by the intellect, now he makes wisdom to be the total acceptance by his nature of that higher nature to which it gives itself in obedience and love. "I will be wise" now means "I will come near to God. I will know Him."

The old Christian temple in Constantinople, now the central mosque of the whole Mussulman world, is called "Saint Sophia." It is consecrated to the holy wisdom. What does its name mean? Was it to the abstract love for principles, the impersonal search for truth that these stately and glowing walls were reared in the years when Christian faith was earnest and alive? Not so! It was not a university but a church. It was to something sacred, personal, divine, that it was dedicated. It was to the wisdom which consisted in the obedient and loving service

of the soul to God; the wisdom which consisted in the service which every faculty could pay to Him, the wisdom which found abundant explanation of the world in Him! It was to the wisdom by which as Solomon sang "The Lord hath founded the earth"; that wisdom which does not sit in the schools and argue, but which standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths; the wisdom of which the fear of the Lord is the beginning and the end.

And now with this new, this deeper, this religious meaning in the words "I will be wise," does the old search become any more hopeful than it was before? Now it is a search for God. But God cannot be pictured as just standing off there and waiting for the soul to come to Him and find Him. A theory of the universe, a comprehensive truth of the nature of things, even that I cannot picture to myself as wholly dead. I have to think of it as something in some sense alive and reaching out with some sort of desire to make itself known to the mind that is so blindly reaching towards it. But just as soon as it is not a theory of the universe but God, a person, a soul, a love, a Father, then what a different thing this life and this outreach toward man becomes. Everything that being can feel towards other being, tempting the communication of his life, is there. Personal love, the desire to communicate and repeat himself, craving to drive out sin, to fill imperfection with perfection, to produce character, to fulfil possibility, all of these unite in one great stream of effluence which comes pouring forth from

God to meet the soul's desire to be wise. All of these make the wisdom of God which comes down to satisfy the soul whose right it is to crave that wisdom.

The wisdom of God! We cannot say those words without remembering that they are used by St. Paul of Jesus Christ. "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God," he writes to the Corinthians. The Incarnation was the full expression of this pouring forth of the personal life of God upon the personal life of man which I have just been trying to describe. It came, He came, with the most overwhelming revelation that God loved man, that God claimed man. After His coming no man who had caught the real spirit of that great event could let himself think for a moment that God stood off motionless and simply waited for the soul to come to Him. The whole universe, to the soul believing in the Incarnation, must quiver and palpitate with God coming for the soul of man.

Oh, what a difference, my friends! We talk sometimes as if for a man to come to believe in the Incarnation was simply for him to add another article to his creed, perhaps in sign that such addition had been made, to transfer his name from one set of church books to another, and to submit to some new Christian rite. It is much more than that. For a man to believe in the Incarnation is for the world to become to that man afire with God. God is reaching out to him everywhere. God believes in him, believes in the possibility of revealing Himself to him; nay, of taking up his abode within him.

Impossibility floats off like a melted cloud. All men become sacred. Whatever else man may find or fail to find, knowledge, wealth, friendship, power, he may certainly find God, for God is seeking him. All this is real to the man who believes in the Incarnation. What right has any such man to be discouraged or dismayed ?

Evidently then the search for wisdom becomes another thing as soon as it becomes religious, as soon as the wisdom for which we seek is God. It becomes full of hope, nay, it is filled with certainty. I know I shall be wise if I can only persevere. But there is something else. Not merely the hopefulness but the whole character of the search is altered. It becomes moral. It is a search for character. And the power and method of it is obedience. That is an enormous change. To make the method of man's growth and attainment to be not the acquisition of knowledge but the obedience to a perfect will, that was an enormous change. It was a transfer of human ambition to a new region. It was the opening of human possibility on a new side. It did not exclude thought and study and intellectual labor. It included them. Only it made them part of the obedience of the lesser to the greater soul, of the child to the father, of the man to God.

One consequence of this transfer of the field, this change of the character of man's struggle after wisdom was in the way in which it opened the possibility of that struggle to all men. When " I will be wise " meant " I will reach the final principles of things by reasoning and meditation " it was a reso-

lution which only a few choice privileged spirits in each generation of the world could make. When "I will be wise" had come to mean "I will obey God and come near to Him, or let Him come near to me by my obedience," it was a resolution which was open to all men, the weakest and the humblest, as well as the strongest and highest, to make. The little child just putting a trembling foot on to the margin of the vast plain of life; the plough-boy busy at his work without a rest for thought from morning till night, from year to year, the practical man strong in affairs but with no gift for abstract speculation, the poor sick woman with no strength left but just to suffer—this new change of the Gospel threw open the gates of wisdom to them all. They all could be wise. Wisdom not as a luxury, not as an ornament, but as a transformation, a regeneration, an illumination of their lives—this was within the power of them all when the road into wisdom became obedience and obedience itself was made to be the knowledge of and likeness to the God whom the soul obeyed.

"Wise unto salvation" is the Bible phrase for this. Think what a significance there is in these familiar words. Wisdom that shines as a star in the forehead, wisdom that wraps the form with dignity like a rich mantle, wisdom that burns in eloquence upon the lips, these all men cannot have. If these are the true successes of a human life, then most human lives must be failures. But wisdom that enters as salvation into the heart all men may have. Hear how St. James describes it, "The wisdom that is

from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." These are not easy things indeed, but they are things not impossible for any man. In the possibility of those things, fruits of the wisdom which is from above, for every man lies the profoundest and most trustworthy assurance of our human brotherhood.

One noble feature of this universality of the capacity of religious wisdom lies in this: that it makes men's best and highest side to be also their side of greatest sympathy and broadest fellowship, and so ensures that the greater men grow in the truest greatness, the more and not the less they should come near to their fellow-men. Many of you will remember the quaint strong verse which is inscribed upon the tomb of Shakespeare's daughter, Mrs. Ann Hall, as she lies hard by the tomb of her father in front of the chancel in the Stratford Church:

> "Witty beyond her sex. But that 's not all
> Wise to Salvation was good Mistress Hall.
> Something of Shakespeare was in that: but this
> Wholly of Him with whom she 's now in bliss."

The words cling to one's memory when he once has read them. And what a true discrimination they suggest. The wit which had in it "something of Shakespeare" is not as strong an appeal to the remembrance and sympathy of one who stands by the worn tombstone as is the wisdom and salvation which is entirely of God and in virtue of which our souls meet hers in Him.

The " wickedness of folly," says Ecclesiastes in the verse the next but one to that from which my text is taken. There again you see we have the same idea—that wisdom is a moral thing. " Folly," or unwisdom, is a wicked thing. Surely another consequence of this Bible idea of wisdom must be that men will learn to seek it with the intensity of their moral natures. It cannot be a mere dilettante study. It must be a thing of life and death.

As Sunday after Sunday we come up here, dear friends, to drink of the water of the fountain and then go down to another week of work and temptation, let us pray that the fruit of our coming may be that the old resolution is fastened more firmly in our hearts. Let us pray that we may go hence every week saying more surely, more enthusiastically, " I will be wise." It is not far from us. It is close at hand. As close as duty! as close as Christ! May He, according to the great promise, be made to us ever more and more wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

VI.

THE DUTIES OF PRIVILEGE.

"But glory, honor, and peace, to the soul of every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile."—ROMANS ii. 10.

THE fact of privilege is everywhere throughout the world. We cannot open the door on any group of men and learn the most superficial story of their lives without finding that some of them have advantages even by no effort of their own which make life seem with them a far brighter and more precious thing than it seems to their brethren. Two boys grow up, one with the noble associations of a home that is full of thought and generous standards; the other in the midst of poverty and ignorance, or, what is just as bad, perhaps worse, wealth and ignorance; vulgar display or stingy selfishness crowding in upon and poisoning his life. One soul falls instantly into a rich abundance of friendships, another goes struggling on its way alone. One man lives in America and another has to live in Turkey. One is tempted and perhaps forced to education, another longs for it and finds no chance. The fact of privilege is everywhere.

And if we try to make light of these differences

and to say: O, these are only outward circumstances, they do not touch the character, we find very soon that they do touch the character. Men have not only better and worse chances to be rich and to be famous, they have better and worse chances to be good. Nothing but the most abject slavery to a theory can claim for a moment that the child of the gutter has the same chance of goodness as the child of the pure and holy home, or that it makes no difference to the possibilities of a man's character whether he lives in China or in England. The fact of privilege is not merely everywhere. It goes deep and touches the most sacred parts of us.

My purpose to-day does not lead me into any attempt to explain this puzzling fact or to show how one may come to look at it complacently. I think there is but one way in which a man can be truly reconciled to it, and that is by faith in God. Faith is a method of looking at life which begins with the personal Governor of life, and, being satisfied of His character, accepts the mysteries of existence as coming from Him, as right because He is right, as capable of harmony and light in those depths of His nature which we cannot fathom. It is an action of the nature perfectly familiar to us in many of the smaller divisions of life, in the family, in the schoolroom, in the state, this action which when we bring it to its largest illustration and see it working towards God we call religious faith.

But this is not what I am to speak of to-day. Rather I want to take the simple fact of privilege indisputably present everywhere. Not to prove it,

not to explain it, but to study it, to see what some of its consequences are, how it makes human life different from what human life would be without it, this is my purpose. There can be no doubt, I think, whatever puzzling questions it may bring with it, that it is the fact of privilege, the inequalities among men for which they do not seem to be responsible, which makes a large part of the interest and richness of human existence. I do not speak simply of the picturesqueness which it gives to life as compared with the monotonous flatness which would come with an absolute equality among men. The country broken into hills and valleys has a picturesque variety, a play of light and shade which delights you and entices you along, far different from the weariness with which you plod across the smooth country where every footstep falls on the same level with the step before it and you can see the blank monotony unbroken to the far-away horizon. But if this picturesque and hilly land is barren while the flat country teems with fertility, then men will love the flat land best and live there most happily. It is not for its beauty but for its fruitfulness that we praise the inequality of life. I believe the more we think, the more we become convinced that the instinct which asks for equality is a low one, and that equality, if it were completely brought about, would furnish play only for the lower instincts and impulses of man. The instincts that spring up with inequality are deeper ones. Helpfulness, reverence, unselfish admiration, discrimination of the essential and the accidental, loyalty, magnanimity, these are what

make men great, and these spring up between unequal men. Certainly the world's greatest teachers have not been levellers. Christ never was. Remember what He said about rulers—His "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." Remember how He promised His disciples that they should sit on their twelve thrones. Remember how while He told the wife of Zebedee that she was all wrong about the kind and the means of the dignity which she desired for her sons, yet that there was a dignity which should be given to them for whom it was prepared of His Father. In His Kingdom of Heaven there was to be a greatest and a least. Nowhere is there any communism in Jesus. The waste of power which communism involves would find no tolerance from Him. All crude and passionate attempts to make a flat equality in human kind have seized hold first of Christ and tried to fasten themselves on Him. But by and by He has failed them, they evidently did not carry Him with them, and at the end they have supported Him by some abstract philosophy, some *à priori* speculation, that blighting agrarianism which found no sanction or sympathy in the great Teacher.

This brings me round to the text, of which I have not spoken yet. The Bible contains one picture of the universal fact of privilege which in dignity and completeness surpasses every other. And St. Paul is commenting on that picture in this verse. God gives, he says, "Glory, honor, and peace to the soul of every man that worketh good, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile." It is a very strong

statement, if we think of it. It declares that the universal laws of spiritual retribution work with peculiar certainty and effect for one nation. It is the universal function of righteousness to bring glory and honor and peace to the souls of righteous men. That function works everywhere. But it works strongest and first for these Jews, this people born of Abraham and living among the hills of Palestine. And we know very well that this idea of Paul belongs to all the Bible. The reason why it does not startle us is that it is so familiar. It is frankly stated everywhere. It is urged upon them as the first fact, the deepest motive of their life. Their venerable ancestor is always seen coming over the hills, away from all the people that belonged to him, leaving the past behind him, holding in his hands as he came the promise of a future full of privilege. He had been chosen. God had called him. Ah! my friends, it puzzles us when we state it calmly as a fact of history, but that story of the call of Abraham has always been intelligible to multitudes of men, because it fell in so completely with what they saw in life. It was a scene of privilege, and privilege was everywhere. That fact of privilege ran down through all the Hebrew story from Abraham to Paul. "I the Lord have severed you from other people that ye should be mine." And this same fact of privilege Paul is declaring to the Jews at Rome.

The Jews, then, are the very type and flower of that fact of privilege and inequality which fills the world. Let us take them as the type and by the

light of their history let us try to get at some truths regarding the position and duty of privileged people everywhere. I speak habitually, and I am speaking this morning to a congregation very largely made up of privileged people. There are circumstances in the lives of most of you, my friends, which have come there by no merit of your own, and which separate your lives from multitudes of others which by no fault of theirs are destitute of some of the circumstances that belong to you. Those circumstances do not necessarily make you happy. On the contrary, they often bring with them new sources of discontent. I suppose that the most fortunate lot in life has its full share of grumblers and complainers. But a position of privilege does bring its own responsibilities and chances. They vary according to the nature of the privilege. Sometimes it is social position, sometimes it is wealth, with all the ease and chance of influence it brings. Sometimes it is education, sometimes it is religious opportunity, a peculiar richness of the means of grace of one sort or another. These are the Judaisms which are perpetual. They separate people who have them from the people who have them not, as the Jews were separated from the Gentiles. In them all the virtues and all the vices that were in historic Judaism are possible. Those who are destitute of them may be often better, stronger, more pleasant persons to contemplate and to have to do with than those who possess them are. So the Gentiles were often better and more satisfactory people than the Jews. But still the value of privi-

lege remains. Its chances are greatest and its judgments are most severe. I speak to-day to those whose lives are in any way lives of privilege, and I want to show them how they may learn to understand and use their lives by the picture of this people of privilege, the Jews.

1. I mention first, then, the frank recognition of their privileged condition which was continually forced upon the Jews. There was something very strong and beautiful in the way in which they were never for a moment allowed to forget that they belonged to God in some peculiar way. No voice ever came out from the darkness in which God abode that did not tell them once again, before it spoke the special message, whether of commendation or rebuke, that they were his people whom he had brought out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, and to whom He had given the land which he had promised to their fathers. Their history was always lighted up by the miracles which God had given to no other people. Whenever they were tempted to think themselves like other nations they heard again in the distance the roar of the Red Sea parting its waters to let them go through, or saw the fires of Sinai glaring still upon the desert sands. No forgetfulness, no cowardice, no mock humility was allowed for a moment to obliterate the everlasting difference that separated them from the Philistines and the Edomites. And here is the first truth, the first duty as concerns all privilege. Here is what God demands of all his chosen people, of every chosen man—the frank and unforgetful recog-

nition of the privilege that God has given him. If God gives a man social position or education or religious influence, He does it for a purpose, and the cowardice or modesty with which a man sometimes ignores the fact defeats that purpose. There is a lofty humility in which the true man says "I have influence, I am rich, I have knowledge"; with as simple truthfulness, though with more solemnity, as he says "I am thirty years old," or "I am tall," or "I am strong." O believe me, my dear friends, we do not make a short and easy end of the temptation to pride which our privileges thrust upon us by just denying our privilege altogether, whether to ourselves or to one another. The true problem is to acknowledge our privilege, to keep it always in our sight, never to forget it for a moment, and yet be humble as the prophets of the Lord, the Jews of Judaism, were humble, who could say such sublime words as "The word of the Lord came unto me," and yet be so free from pride that they could serve the meanest of their people.

Through all the world the beauty of simple truthfulness impresses us always more and more. That everything should know itself clearly and declare itself frankly, the very mention of such a thought flashes a picture before our eyes, the picture of a great, rich forest where everything has been distorted and told untrue tales about itself in a thick fog, now as the fog rises simply revealing every leaf and trunk and twig and flower just as it is and growing beautiful with truth. This is what makes the power of nature always—her perfect frankness

and radiant content—no restless aspiration and no mock humility. The violet says simply "I am small and beautiful," the oak says just as simply "I am broad and strong and grand." Each tells its simple fact. But we men are always falsifying our lives. While we are nothing we are always lifting up our voice and saying that we are something. As soon as we are something we cover ourselves with a thin humility and say "O, I am nothing." The first falsehood we all condemn. But the second we are apt to think is graceful and good. But it is not either. It is ugly and bad. The first duty of every man whom God has put on any pedestal is not to crouch down and make himself seem no taller than the other men upon the ground but to stand at his full height, and on the pedestal which God, not he, has built for him to lift aloft whatever torch God may give him to hold.

2. But go on further. The next feature in God's treatment of his privileged people consisted in the way in which He was always forcing absolute standards upon them. The very fact of their privilege, as he was always telling them, took them out of the range of mere comparison with their neighbors and compelled them to be judged directly by him. The Jews said "We are no worse than the Moabites." "Nay," was God's answer, in some unmistakable utterance of his right hand, "but the Moabites are not your standard. Let Midian and Moab test themselves by one another. You are my people and I, only I, must be your judge." This runs through all their history. Their exaltation lifts them

up to higher tests. The valleys may compare themselves with one another and see which has most of the dim twilight which is all that any of them gain, but Mt. Blanc can only test the whiteness of its snowy dome by the brilliant glory of the sun itself. And this is true of all privilege. You have a chance of education—at once your judgment seat is raised. Your standard of comparison is altered. It will not do for you, the educated man, to look around upon the mass of ignorance and say "I know as much as these men know." You are separated from them by your privilege. You must match yourself against absolute standards. What fraction is that which you know of the entire truth? That is the scholar's test. The true scholar is known by the way in which he accepts that test and willingly applies it to himself. Or you have influence. Men look to where you stand for guidance. It will not do for you to say "I do as much good in the community as other men." You must be driven home into the absolute question "How does the good you do fall short of the best that a man can do for his fellow-men? Or you are where religious opportunity is bright around you. Your education has made you know Christ from your childhood. The Bible has been never shut. The church is always open. Is it for you to say "I am as pious as most men?" Must not your privilege lift you up above all low comparisons and partial estimates until you meet the word of Christ and hear him say "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father is perfect."

I think that this stands very high among the advantages which are given to a life of privilege. It has an opportunity of coming, as it were, more directly to the judgment seat of God. The man of privilege may disown this advantage. The king upon the throne may extenuate his cruelty or meanness by comparing himself with the people whom he rules. You, set perhaps where a social circle larger or smaller looks up to you and envies you and copies you, may basely ask of yourself no more than merely to be equal to the average standards of the multitudes who follow you, but if you do so you throw away your opportunity. The boy in school who, climbing to the topmost seat, passes out of comparison with his school-fellows, comes in sight of the higher judgments which prevail among older boys or among men in the great world for which boyhood is a preparation. The world is made up of a vast series of judgment halls, in each of which sits some judge of some degree of dignity. Each judge in his own court has his own order of men who are judged by him. Public opinion sits in one chamber and judges its public; business success sits in another and gives its judgments; and so they rise in dignity. And each degree and kind of privilege takes a man out of the judgment of some lower court, but it brings him into the judgment of a higher. Wealth frees a man from the necessity of business conflict. He is not obliged to show in the wrestle of the Exchange what sort of man he is, but he is summoned by his wealth to a higher and harder test. He is compelled to manifest his manhood not by his skill

in getting money but by his generosity in using it. The man born into a host of friends is not tried by the tests of solitary endurance, but his character is brought to the severe analysis of multiplied relations. So everywhere. A man's privileges release him from one judgment seat only to bring him to another higher, more absolute, and more exacting. And at the head of all stands the judgment of God, the great white throne. to which all lives come at last, to which the lives of highest privilege come most immediately, and which no privilege is lofty enough to fly over and escape.

If this were not true, privilege would grow into insufferable arrogance. Freed from the lower restraint and entering into none higher it would tread upon the necks of men with brutal insolence. Wherever privilege has claimed for itself such freedom from all judgment it has oppressed the world and made itself seem hateful. But there have been privileged men and women, there are such to-day, whose privilege has made them all the more conscious of authority, and their lives are the most beautiful that we see anywhere. There are men whom no necessity of daily bread compels to work, and yet whom no man dreams of calling idle. They labor in some cause of God, some work of charity or culture for mankind as faithfully as any drudge drags out his weary, hated task. There are men and women whom nothing that we call self-interest compels to court the favor of their fellow-creatures by civility, who yet are full of gracious courtesy to all the children of their Father. Such privilege as that

does not disgust but wins men. Men do not hate it. It represents to them true kingliness. It opens to them the way by which they themselves may rise to higher standards.

> "Ah, great and gentle Lord,
> Who wast, as is the conscience of a saint
> Among his warring senses, to thy Knights."

So speaks his beautiful, false, and repentant queen to King Arthur, who is in romance the perfect picture of privilege that has found its way to higher judgment seats by the very greatness that exempts it from the lower. It is stricter as well as loftier in its obedience as the conscience is more sternly as well as more nobly ruled by the senses. David's whole kingdom looks up to him, makes him its standard, lives or dies by his smile or frown. But David himself stands upon the summit and cries directly up to God, "Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence."

Not that the souls which we call privileged alone can thus directly submit themselves to absolute standards and find out the judgment seat of God. The humblest and most trampled and encumbered life may go there freely. The valley may look up to the sun as boldly as the hill top. Only it must look past the hill top, and I am only picturing the actual state of things when I say that it is apt to catch much of its light from the mountain's reflection while the mountain must get its directly from the sun.

O men and women with your lives of privilege,

do not disown this which is their best prerogative. Let the very certainty that your education or your wealth or your position did not come to you by any merit of your own make it a solemn thing to you. All good comes from Him. But the good that comes by a man's own labor seems to have come through many hands and to have lost something of the sacredness of its origin. But your good things it seems as if you took directly from the hands of God. His hands touched your hands as He gave them to you. They are warm with His touch, they are bright with His look still. Let them be sacred to you. Let them be symbols to you not so much of your freedom from low authorities as of your loyalty to the highest. Let them signify humility and faith, and make your life strong and gentle by keeping it in God's presence.

3. But one more truth remains, the deepest truth about the purpose and the proper use of privilege. It is the truth that privilege is given to any man not for himself alone but for the good of other people. We must go back to our Jews again, our types of privilege. The struggle of God with that people was to make them fit for certain offices which they were to render to mankind. There can be nothing more ignoble than to think of God as choosing one nation out of all the world and petting it and making it his favorite, rewarding it when it was good and petulantly punishing it when it was bad, as one might do with a favored wilful child. But there can be nothing finer than the thought of God taking one of His nations and moulding it, training it, fusing

its life into transparency so that it might be capable of transmitting Him and His blessing to the rest. That was what their privilege was for. "To the Jew first and also to the Gentile." The Jew failed over and over again to know God's purpose. He took the privilege which he was to help other people with and treated it like a luxury of his own. He was like the crew of a ship sent to carry provisions to a sick and starving people over the sea, who on the way forget the purpose of the voyage and drink the wine and eat the bread themselves as if they had been stored there only for their luxurious living. There is something grotesque about it when we state it so. There is something tragically grotesque about all the same misuse of privilege for selfish purposes as we see it everywhere in life. What is that man doing who lives there by the wayside in his gorgeous house and eats and drinks and entertains his friends and thinks how good it is for him that he was born without duties or the necessity of work. Why, he is merely out at sea, floating along before light winds, merrily or gloomily eating and drinking up his cargo. What is that religious Sybarite about, who with the noblest Church, the most exquisite service, the purest associations surrounding his sheltered life, is worshipping God as if he had no missionary duty, saying "O God, thou art my God" so earnestly that it seems as if there were no God left for anybody else. When you think what God made the man a Christian for, there is something tragically grotesque about it. He has lost the purpose of his privilege and is taking for himself what God gave

him to transmit to other men, to His great hungry world of men.

This truth regarding privilege is shown in the tendency which every unused privilege manifests to disappear. The naturalists now are tracing many of the varieties of physical structure to the way in which bodily organs which from any circumstances are not used dwindle and shrivel up and pass away. And so it is with privileges of whatever sort when they are not used for the blessing of other men beside the possessor. This certainly was true about our specimens of privilege, the Jews. They were selfish about their privileges, wanted to keep them to themselves, and where are their privileges to-day? The world has taken the truth out of the hands of the faithless priest, and goes its way, using the truth, but leaving the priest helpless and neglected by the wayside. This is men's belief about the highest gifts always. This was Christ's story of the talents. There is a legend of the Irish Saint, Columba, and a monk who had some precious religious books. Columba begged that he might see them, but the monk refused. Then Columba broke out indignantly, "May thy books no longer do thee any good, thee, nor those that come after thee, since thou takest occasion by them to show thy inhospitality." And the monk's books became unintelligible. "They still exist," says an author of 300 years later, "but no man can read them."

I know how with regard to certain kinds of privilege it will seem as if this were not true. "Look," men will say, "here is a selfish rich man who never

uses his wealth for other people and yet his riches do not fly away. He is as rich as ever." But it is like the unused limb. It does not disappear at once. It shrivels and dries up. The life goes out of it. And so your social position or your wealth shrivels if it is selfish. The respectability and pleasure which are their life pass out of them. They become mere shells which any wind of circumstance may blow away. So the best enthusiasm dies out of selfish learning and all real earnestness out of selfish religion.

These then are the truths concerning privilege. Recount them in your minds. All privilege is to be frankly owned and its responsibilities accepted. All privilege which lifts men above the dependence upon fellow-men ought to bring them more clearly into the sight and the judgment of God. All privilege belongs to the privileged men, not for themselves but for other men. Think of the life of Jesus. It was all full of privilege. A difference from other men which his oneness with other men only made more manifest. A superiority which was so absolute that the common types and symbols of superiority, money and rank, would have seemed most impertinent. And see in Him how all these truths of privilege were evident. He frankly took His place. He did not make believe that He was not different from other men. He said "Come unto me" as if He were the centre of the world. And the more He stood above men, the nearer did He stand to His Father. He was always in God's sight

doing God's work. And yet all His separateness from men was for men's sake. He was the divine Saviour for the souls of men. He lived and died as no other man ever did only that all other men, if they would, might come to live and die like Him.

These are the truths concerning privilege. In their degree all the greatest souls of our race have illustrated them. They have frankly accepted their position of genius or of power. They have owned God's judgment. They have lived for fellow-men. Think of Socrates or Milton.

And now, my friends, you, as I said, are very largely people of privilege. Let me speak plainly with you. Many of you are rich. Many of you have social influence. Many of you have education, almost all of you have had the Church and the blessings of religion all your lives. Now sometimes it seems well to tell privileged people that they must not think about their privileges. But to-day I beg you to think about them very earnestly. Own the great truths concerning them. If you are rich you must frankly own your wealth and take the position which it gives with all the duties that belong to it. If you have been born in the very centre of church light, you must not make believe to yourself or to other people that it is all the same as if you were a heathen. It is as bad for the rich man to make believe that he is poor and so shirk his responsibilities as for the poor man to make believe that he is rich and so ruin himself by extravagance. First own your place with that frank acceptance of the facts of life which is the only real humility, and then let

your privilege solemnize you. Frankly owned, not hidden as if it were something of which you ought to be ashamed, let it bring you into and keep you in the very presence of Him who gave it to you. Let it hold you with a grasp that you cannot escape before the judgment seat of God. And, above all, know that it is a trust and never dare to make a luxury out of it. Understand that your wealth or your education, or your religious light is not thoroughly made your own till you have begun to use it for other people.

O if the people of privilege all through this city could get these truths and hold them! How ignorant they are about them now. How they behave like children to whom have been given jewels that might glorify and enrich the world but who hide them under a child's awkward bushel made of pride and shame or use them only to deck out their foolish baby-houses. O for some voice of Christ to come to them and say "Ye are the light of the world. If the light that is in you is darkness how great is that darkness."

It is no feeble and fictitious levelling of the world that we desire. Men are not jealous of privilege if privilege is only worthy of its privileges. You who are rich and lofty and educated and religious, beware, beware, of what befel that Jewish people who were once to the rest of the world what you are now to the rest of the community. They were what you are. Beware lest by repeating their unworthiness you come to be what they are. It is possible for you to be what they might have been, to take all

their promises and find the truth they never found in them. God says to you as He said to them, They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.

VII.

THE SACREDNESS OF LIFE.

"He asked life of Thee and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever."—PSALMS xxi. 4.

THE poetry of the twenty-first Psalm is very picturesque. King David is the writer, but the whole people of Israel are represented as the speakers. First they address themselves to God and praise Him for the blessings which he has given to their monarch. Then they turn to the king himself and rejoice with him upon the victory over his enemies and the escape from his troubles which is before him. And then in the last verse they turn back again to God and ascribe the glory and power entirely to Him. "Be thou exalted, Lord, in thine own strength, so will we sing and praise thy power."

The Psalm is therefore, in most spirited and poetic form, the expression of David's own gratitude and hope and devotion.

The verse which I have quoted for our text fixes our attention on the first part of the Psalm, the gratitude of David. The people are singing of God's mercy to their beloved king. They remember how, perhaps in some special emergency when his life

seemed in danger, perhaps in that long aspiration of youth which is one long prayer for life, David had begged God to let him live. "He asked life of thee," and then they record how God was better to David than his prayer. "Thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever," or, as our Prayer-Book version has it, "He asked life of thee and thou gavest him a long life, even for ever and ever." It is this verse which I wish to study with you. What does it mean? Surely David does not dream that God in answer to his prayer for life had really made his life immortal. Already as he wrote he must have felt in eye and hand some of those symptoms of advancing age which even in the full strength of maturity prophesy decay. It must have been that David caught sight of that other kind of earthly immortality which has always fascinated noble minds. He saw the perpetuation of his influence. He saw that the spiritual dynasty which was represented in him was to continue in long power over unborn generations of mankind. The Christ who was to come in the fulfilment of that which he prefigured was to reign forever. This was the immortality which he heard God promising him. He asked life. Asked to be saved from death by sickness, or by the paw of the lion or the paw of the bear, or by the soldiers of Saul. And God gave him life. And at first, it may be, he thought that God had given him no more than he had asked for, only the immediate escape from dying. But by and by he found that the life which God had given him was a long and deep and mysterious thing. It was vastly richer

in character and destiny than he had dreamed of. Slowly it opened to him and he saw that it was something with vast connections, something whose power touched spiritual forces and never should decay, something belonging to the unending life of God. It was eternal life which God had given him. "He had asked life and God had given him a long life even for ever and ever."

It is thus that these words of David have suggested to me the subject of which I wished to speak to you to-day. I have wondered whether I could make you see how that same deepening sight of life which came to David may come to us, does come to many men who get below the first appearance, the mere surface of life and see its deeper meaning. We too ask God for life. Every struggle for self-support; every shudder at the thought of dying, every delight in existence is a cry for life. We may not mean it for a prayer. We may not turn it Godward. With us, as we utter it, it may be a mere vague cry into the darkness, but God hears it as a cry to Him, just exactly as if you walked upon the beach at night and heard a drowning man shouting in terror, his shout would be in your ears a prayer to you, although he did not know that you were there, and only shouted in the vagueness of his terror. So every struggle that we make to live is a prayer to God for life. And the continuance of our existence is God's answer to our prayer. But when we first take the life which He gives us we do not know what it is. Its depth, its richness only opens to us gradually. Only gradually do we learn that

God has given to us not merely the power of present being and present enjoyment, but that wrapt up and hidden in that He has given us the power of thinking, feeling, loving, living in such deep and lofty ways that we may be in connection with the great continuous unbroken thoughts and feelings and movements of the universe. The life which He has given us is in its capacities not merely a thing of this moment. It is a part of the life of the universe. It is eternal life.

We can understand it best perhaps if we look back to the very beginning of life and follow the human spirit in its development. It is possible for our imaginations even to picture the soul praying for life before it has begun to live. We all remember those verses from Pope's Messiah which are made into one of the hymns of our hymnal. The poet is singing of the kingdom of God that is to come, the new Jerusalem and its inhabitants:

> "See a long race thy spacious courts adorn,
> See future sons and daughters yet unborn,
> In crowding ranks on every side arise
> Demanding life, impatient for the skies."

The cry of the unborn for life! That is the sound which fills the poet's vision. By and by comes God's answer to that prayer. The unborn come to the birth and life is given. We all know how that life seems to be merely life, life in its first and simplest form at the beginning, and so it goes on through all the earliest years. The unconscious infant lives in a mere animal existence, and later

when the strong and healthy boy begins to grow conscious of the delight of life, it is pure life, life simply as a fact, life not with reference to the deeper powers it contains or the far-off issues with which it has to do that gives him such hourly delight in living. There comes back to many of us, I am sure, the ringing verse in which Browning has made this very David, when he was a boy, sing in the presence of King Saul of this pure consciousness of joy in the mere fact of being alive.

"Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree; the cool silver shock
Of the plunge in a pool's living water,—the hunt of the bear,
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.
And the meal—the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust divine
And the locust's flesh steeped in the pitcher! the full draught of wine,
And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell
That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.
How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy."

"Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." So Ecclesiastes, the Preacher, sings the same truth, the truth of man's, the healthy man's, pure delight in life, long before he has looked down into the depth of life to ask what treasures are hidden there, or looked out along the distant vista of life to ask what he shall do with it. In his placing of a bright, unquestioning boyhood at the beginning of every man's career, does it not seem as if God had meant to indicate

that this sense of life as a blessing in itself must be the basis out of which all the sense of the special blessedness of special events in life must grow, as if He meant to have us take life as a whole and thank Him for our creation before we looked deeper and saw what were the true purposes of life. But by and by the time for that deeper look must come. Not always can David be content with the leaping from rock to rock, the plunge in the pool and the sleep in the dry bed of the summer brook. The thoughts and anxieties and duties of a man come crowding up into the life of the light-hearted boy. Care for things to which he once was all indifferent, hopes of things about which he once never dreamed, ambitions and desires of influence and power, the delight in half-discovered faculties, and as the crown of all, conscious religion or the realized relationship with God, the love of and the obedience to Christ, all of these become his one after another. One after another life comes to mean these things. And now what shall we say ? How have these things come to the man. See him at forty rich in all these, the earnest, thoughtful, religious man, full of associations with the world and with his fellow-man and God. This is the same being with the boy who played in simple health and thoughtlessness thirty years ago. How have all these things come to him ? Have angels come down one by one, each bringing one of these new gifts and put them one by one into his life. Have they not rather opened one by one out of that life itself, called out by God, urged out by the half-blind desire to be all that it had

within itself the capacity of being, but certainly coming forth out of the very substance of the life itself, and therefore having been in the life from the beginning. There never was a moment when the hand of God touched Shakespeare's lips and bade him be the poet. Never a time when as a new endowment a breath from Heaven gave to St. John the capacity to be a saint. Never a day when the nature of Raphael was filled with genius. These things were in these men from the beginning of their lives. When as in Pope's imaginative picture their spirits prayed for life, and when God gave them life, this was what God gave them. This poetry, this genius, the sublimeness was all wrapped up in that first gift of life when God said "Let this man be." All that has to do with His own unending life was there. The eternal life of these men, this God gave to them. All that was to open out of their being forever, all that they were to be on to the endless end, all this God gave them when He answered the prayer of their unborn spirits. They asked life of Him, and He gave them a long life, even forever and ever.

We talk of Raphael, and Shakespeare, and St. John. But we might talk of any men. We talk of them only because their illustrious excellence makes glorious and clear what is true of all mankind. In all men the life which God gives has in it the capacity of all which the man forever hereafter is to be. In all men, the first life that appears, that which we commonly call life, the mere vitality, is the foundation of the entire life, the basis upon which must

rest all the structure of the growing character. How interesting this makes the beginning of a life appear. Some day I walk along one of our streets and men are laying the foundations of a new house which is going to be built. It is interesting in itself,—the driving of the piles, the laying of the massive stones, the exercise of power and of skill. But the true interest of what they are doing lies in the consciousness that this is a foundation. The lines on which these great stones are laid mark the dimensions and partitions of the coming house. I look up and the air already seems to be quivering with the yet unbuilt walls. He who is laying these stones has the walls in his brain and is already building them. That makes it interesting. But let it stop, and then you feel instantly how destitute of value the foundation is in itself. A foundation that has never been built upon is the saddest sight upon a city street. A crumbling foundation on which a building which is now burnt down once stood is sad. Still it has the memory of having once done its true work. But a foundation that has been well laid and then stopped short and had no house built on it is the most sad of all. At once it suggests its human parallel. "This man began to build but was not able to finish," we say. "So is he who layeth up treasure for himself but is not rich toward God." The first life that has stopped short and never gone on to complete itself in the higher lives, mere vitality which has advanced and opened into no great character and usefulness, these are the human parallels of the foundation stones upon which the bank-

rupt or discouraged or fickle-minded builder never has gone on to build his house.

You have only to add one element to our simple metaphor and it becomes complete. You have only to conceive of the foundation stones becoming conscious of themselves and knowing what is happening to them, and then they represent completely that earliest, rudimentary life upon the basis of which all the other lives rest and which finds its value in its power to carry and develop them. Let the foundation feel the unbuilt building, and what joy must fill it as it finds itself growing more compact and solid. Every blow of the hammer which makes it more fit for what it is to carry rings like a bell from the steeple that is some day to pierce the sky. Surely there is something which corresponds to that in the human life. Surely the mere vitality, the mere animal living, if we choose to call it so, may be a different thing in the young human animal from what it is or can be in the young animal of any other kind, because of the premonitions, however dim and vague, of the life of intellect and of love and of religion which are to rest upon it. And when the years pass and no house is built, when only the foundation stands, must not that, too, if we imagine into it a consciousness, be disappointed and full of the sense of failure in a way which will find its parallel in the life of every man whose life lingers as the years go by in the first rudimentary conditions and never advances to any of the higher uses for which it was made. O the unused foundations of character which stand along our human streets and make the

city of our human life so tragical. O the men here who are nothing but grown-up boys, who have never built upon their boyhood any real manly life. O the bodily vigor that has never been put to any strong work for God or fellow-man; the quick senses that have never been put to any higher employment than the shooting of a bird; the observation of our brethren that once was healthy sympathy but has developed into no true interest in our brethren's best good and so remains to-day only in the wretched shape of the old man's or the old woman's taste for gossip and scandal. O the fresh spontaneity which never having found its true task wanders still in dilettante dissipation among a thousand fancies. O the first crude imaginations about God, which never having been refined and elevated by careful and loving thought about Him have settled down into the bigotries and idolatries of middle life. These are the specimens of what I mean by the primary, rudimentary life becoming sad and miserable because it does not go boldly and freely on to fulfil itself in the higher lives. The temporal life which is not allowed to open into the eternal life becomes corrupt and feeble in its temporalness. The man who does not carry forward his care for himself and complete it with a loving care for God and for God's children, loses the best power of self-care. He who having asked God for life does not take the deeper and longer life which comes in answer to his prayer loses the best joy of the life which he does try to take.

I have prolonged these definitions and illustrations because I was very anxious to make clear even by

much reiteration how there are these two lives in every full grown man, the life for which man asks and the deeper life which God gives; and how these two stand always related to one another, as the house to the foundation on which it is built, or, perhaps better, as the pattern to the stuff into whose substance it is woven. And I have done all this because I wanted to get at this further question which seems to me to be very pressingly important. What effect upon our treatment of the lower life will such a vision of the higher life which ought to be built on it produce. At first it might seem as if the mere physical life and all that belongs to it would seem contemptible and only worthy of neglect to one who had caught sight of the diviner purposes of living. But very soon we see that that is not so. It gives us new ideas about the mere fact of life when we thus discern the loftier purposes of life, but it does not make life contemptible or insignificant. Let us see what one or two of such ideas are.

The first of them is obedience. Any man who knows that his bodily life and all that immediately belongs to it has its real value as the scene of experience and the material of operations which belong to the mind and the soul, must of necessity seek for some power to whom the mind and body belong and ask of Him to make the body ready for the high and mysterious functions of which it can itself be most imperfectly aware, for which it can but most imperfectly prepare itself. To give ourselves into the will of God that He may do in us that which He made us for, which we ourselves but dimly

understand, that is the only true completion of our life. O how we talk of submission to God as if it were the hard concession to necessity or else as if it were the last refuge of despair instead of being what it is, the fulfilment and consummation of our life. As if you took the chisel which had been trying to carve by itself and put it into the hand of Michael Angelo, so only infinitely higher is it when you teach your soul to say "O Lord, not my will but thy will be done." It is no cry of a defeated man. It is the soul seizing on the privilege and the right of having itself completed after God's pattern. The parable of the prodigal son has the whole story in it. The man submitting is the man completed. O if our brave, self-confident young men only knew this. Full of pure joy in life as life, full of the delight of "mere living," they look forward and the dream comes to them that sometime or other life may break and then they will go to God for repair, sometime or other (so they shuddering feel) they may fall into terrible sin and then they will go to God for forgiveness. But to go to God now for completeness, to go and lay life into the obedience of God as a diamond lays itself into the sunshine that the mere surface brilliancy may deepen and region behind region of splendor be revealed below, that does not seem to come into their thought. The cry "submit, submit," "obey, obey," seems to them to mean "come down! come down!" But it really means "come up!" Let God who has given you so abundantly the earthly life, the life of time, give you into and through it, the life of Heaven, the eternal life.

2. Again our doctrine enforces most impressively, I think, the need of purity in the life of the body for the soul's sake. Here are you, let us say, just where King David was when as a boy he lived in that bright, sunny, superficial life which Mr. Browning describes in the verses which I quoted some time ago, the life of the mountain and the fountain and the river bed, the life of physical spirits and the joy of mere existence. Not yet have opened the deeper depths to you. Not yet have you begun to hunger after truth, to puzzle over the problems of the world, to seek for spiritual holiness. But you know the time for all those deeper lives must come to you. You would not bear to think of yourself as possibly going on forever living thus only on the outside. You mean to be religious some day. Of course the true, the only true way is to be religious now. Now is the real time to open these deeper lives which you do mean some day to live. But till you open them, while you are lingering and hesitating and living still in the fresh delights of the external life, it is good that you should feel already the influence of that deeper life which is to be some day, begging you to keep the life in which you are living even now pure for its sake. O if I could let you see the men who, when they come to the great effort to be Christians, find a terrible remonstrance in the dulness and heaviness of their whole being brought on them by years of dissipation or of idleness. Here is the young man who is not a Christian yet. He might be. Let him not think for a moment that it is only for old men to give themselves to the gracious service

of the Son of man. Thank God, there are some boys among you who have learned better than that the chances and privileges of our human life. But this young man is not a Christian yet. Can he do anything even now? Surely he can! If ever he gives himself to God's service it must be with these hands that he will do the will of the Lord whom he will then love with all his heart. Therefore let him keep these hands pure and make them alert and strong. If ever he seeks for the signs of his then acknowledged God in all creation, it must be through these eyes and through all these senses that the rich, overwhelming witness must pour in. Therefore let him guard those senses from the least taint of impurity, from the sluggishness and obstruction which falls like a curse upon the body in which a man has lived a dissipated life. If this young man ever, made a Christian, is to enter into the deep and helpful associations with his fellow-men which are the delight and duty of the Christian life, it will be by the profounder opening and the broader extension of these social relations in which he is living now that that new social life will come, therefore let him keep these social relations scrupulously clean and true. This is the way in which you may be faithful already to whatever unguessed deeper life God has in His intentions for you. No man is living worthily who is not faithful already to the future life which he does not yet understand, but which he knows must come. "Your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost," says Paul. Before the God has occupied the temple, the temple must feel the influence of his promised

coming and keep its empty courts clean for Him. Are there not some men here, not yet devoted to the highest life which is Christ's service, who are yet conscious enough of some mysterious richness of experience of life before them, to make them ready to listen when one begs them to keep their whole present life, their whole bodily life pure and true and active, so that whatever may claim them in the days to come shall find them with natures so fresh and sound that they can answer to its claim.

I know indeed that it is out of the very substance of our sins that God's unbounded and ingenious mercy can make the new life. I know that into the shattered structure of a misused and degraded body He can pour His spiritual strength. I know that on the tattered canvas of a profligate life he can weave the glorious patterns of His grace. But truths like these, confirmed by multitudes of notable histories, must never make us think so base a heresy as that a man must go through wickedness to get to goodness, or that a pure youth does not display a fairer theatre for the work of grace than a young life all torn and stained with sin. Every man's youth, be it as pure as it may, will offer enough for God to forgive, enough from which the soul, come to its conversion, can gather the fruits of humble penitence. But it will always be the hills which lift themselves the highest in the dark and look most frankly toward the quarter from which the promising must come when it does come; it will always be these hills that will first and most easily and most richly catch the glory of the rising sun. Therefore keep your life

pure that some day God may make it holy! Be faithful already to the faith which shall be yours some day.

3. Let me say one single but most earnest word about the necessary sacredness and inviolability which this truth of ours when it is thoroughly accepted gives to our physical life. Nothing, I believe, can give a man a sure, reliable conviction that under no circumstances of pain or disappointment has he a right to cast away his life, nothing can give and keep to a man a true and manly certainty that he is bound, no matter how he hates it, to stand at the post where God has put him till the God who put him there calls him away, except the clear perception that this physical life is but the material and condition of deeper spiritual life which is the only finally valuable thing. The man whose whole nature is steeped in and pervaded by that truth will stand in spite of everything, while God in any way, through the pain of the body, if need be, calls up the soul and bids it live its life, and makes the man by suffering which he will not run away from, a spiritual man.

Every now and then a strange phenomenon appears which shows how the sacredness of life depends upon the preservation of clear ideas of the deepest purposes of life. Every now and then some physician or some other man whose eye is fastened principally on man's physical structure stands up with the plea that if a man is sick with an incurable disease and doomed to hopeless suffering it is the right and even the duty of science to relieve him of his

sufferings by gently taking away his life. It is an atrocious insult to the essential and inalienable sacredness of life. "There is nothing but suffering for this poor creature," cries such an arrogant doctor, "therefore let him die!" Nothing but suffering! As if God were not every day using the body's suffering to cultivate the soul's eternal life. As if just as soon as there was a hard lesson to be learned you ought to kill the scholar. One trembles as he thinks what pictures of human patience, what visions of ripened character which have been revelations and inspirations to generations of mankind, what spectacles of the spiritual possibilities of humanity, nay, what sights of refined and exalted happiness in the triumph of the spirit over the flesh, must have been lost to the world if doctors such as these had had their way from the beginning. No! The life of the human body is a sacred thing, because in it and through it comes the deeper life. Man must stand by his post, and no other man must drive him from it, because so only can God give man His best revelations and use him for His most effective work.

And so we come back to King David and our text. The old, old prayer for life. How the whole world has rung with it! In what various tones it has gone up to God. Not merely from sick beds where life seemed to be just slipping away out of the grasp of desperate men. Not merely at the foot of thrones where wretches begged their tyrants not to cut short their wretched days. But all the stir of living is a cry for life. All the struggle of business is an appeal of man to live. All industry, all

enterprise, all thought, echoes with the dread of death, the prayer for life! And God hears it and gives the world, and gives to you and me, day by day, the life we ask. But oh, that as He gives it to us day by day we may know the full richness of what He gives. Every morning He puts into our hands anew the mystery of our existence. The chance to think true thoughts, to do brave and kind deeds, to love him, and to help our brethren—these, the great chances of the soul, these, the eternal life, the "long life even forever and ever" He gives us day by day when we ask for life. O may He give us something more, the gift of His own sight that we may know as He knows all the depth of this life which He gives to us, and live it obediently and purely and patiently, and so come in it and by it always nearer to Him who gives it to us.

VIII.

THE GIFTS OF GOD.

"Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto thee."—Acts iii. 6.

It was the first miracle which the apostles wrought after Jesus had left them. Peter and John, full of their new power and with the mystery of their new life all stretching out before them, went up into the temple at the hour of prayer. They passed through the crowd that always was gathered there, and at the door, just as he might crouch beside any church-door to-day, there sat a crippled beggar. And perhaps seeing something in the faces of these two men which he did not understand but which made him hopeful, he asked Peter and John for charity. They gave him no money. They had none to give him. Poor men themselves, they were as destitute of the one thing on which his heart was set as he was. Silver and gold they had none. But they had something better. Full of the spirit and the health of Christ they had the power of giving health to him, and Peter took the cripple by the hand and lifted him up, and his feet and ankle bones received strength, and he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God.

Such is the beautiful story. The goodness of God by these His two disciples was so much richer than the poor beggar dreamed of. Little he thought that morning as he left his house and crawled up to the temple of what was coming to him before the night closed in. To gather a few pennies as on other begging days was all he hoped for; but this, to come back home a straight, strong man, this he had never pictured to himself. It was a good instance of the way in which men live with one another, the hard and rigid way in which we touch each other's lives. It is only in certain appointed forms, only through certain conventional mediums, that men come near to one another and give each other the help that man ought to give to man. Out of the manifold points in which we ought to come in contact with one another, this or that is arbitrarily selected, and if we cannot meet there we stay apart, and so it is often sad to think how much of the best which we might get from one another we must be continually losing. This poor man expected money. If any one of the crowd had money and would give it he could help him, but he looked for nothing from anybody else. And so we expect help and comfort in working out this human life of ours from certain people and in certain prescribed ways; and if we are in the position to give certain kinds of help we are willing to accept the duty, but all the time it seems as if there must be other doors open through which help and ministry might flow back and forth between us.

For we all know that the best help that has been

given to us in life has not come from those who gave us money or anything which money could represent. Prominent as money stands in all our thoughts of charity we owe more to-day to those who have never given us, perhaps who never could have given us a penny, but who have given us something that is far more valuable than money—the Peters and the Johns who in some need have said to us as we looked up to them, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto thee," and who then have touched some dead and withered part of our nature and by their strong character given it back its strength.

I want to dwell a little while on this. I want to speak of the invaluable gifts that it is in the power of man to give to man—that is to say, using the word literally, of the gifts which cannot be valued or estimated. Not the gifts of money or influence which make the receiver so much richer, but the more spiritual gifts of life and character, whereby a man may be benefited not merely by the lowest and grossest but by the finest and highest which his fellow-man possesses. I have various reasons for choosing my subject: I would make the rich man feel that he cannot do his whole duty by any brother by gifts of money, however lavish they may be; I would make the poor man feel that his poverty by no means shuts him out from the very noblest privilege of charity; and I would try to make everybody feel that there is a lofty and dignified dependence in which we may always be looking up to other people, not with a mean expectation that they will give us

money but with a generous hope that they will bestow upon us their intelligence, their inspirations, their comfort, their religion.

I honor the influence of money. I excuse no man from the duty, I except no man from the privilege, of bounteously and wisely giving it to whom it has been intrusted, but there are higher things to give than money, and any man who really wants to give something may find something to give, though his purse be as empty as the purses of the two apostles.

To what shall we apply, then, what we have been saying, in order to make it clearer and more definite ? I apply it in a very few words first to ideas, then to moral inspirations, then to sympathy, and then to religion. A man may be able to give any of these, and yet be very poor in silver and gold.

1. First, then, about the ideas or the knowledge that comes to us in any way. They are beyond all value in mere money terms. It does not need a very high attainment to be able to say " More than all the money that I have made in life is the knowledge that I have gained." Many a poor student, looking about him, is able with a perfectly honest heart to say, " If I had my life to live over again I would not choose differently. I would give it again to winning knowledge, not to winning wealth, for knowledge is more to me than wealth is." But while the clear sense of the superior value of knowledge is thus no uncommon thing, the feeling of responsibility about knowledge as something that a man has no right to keep to himself is much less common than it is about money. Many a man has

a blind notion of stewardship about his property, but very few have it about their knowledge. We all feel that it is disgraceful for a man to be very rich and give nothing away, but we look complacently enough at the man who makes his culture a mere selfish luxury. One grows tired of seeing cultivated people with all their culture cursed by selfishness. But surely to give a man an idea is better than to give him a dollar, unless he is starving and needs something to eat upon the spot. And if you, among my hearers, who have no money to give away but have been trained to careful study, to serious and thoughful lives, only knew it, you have a power of charity that no millionaire possesses. Not in some special form, not by mounting the preacher's pulpit or the professor's chair, but by steadily bearing in mind that what you know and think, you know and think not for yourselves alone but for others, you may become the centre of a little green spot of intelligence in the midst of this arid wilderness which we call society, as a live tree gathers the moisture and keeps off the sun for a little circle of grass that grows bright and rich under its branches. It is better than silver and gold. The dollar is spent and the man again is hungry, but the idea is implanted, the intelligence is stirred, and the man is richer and happier forever.

2. This is one sort of charity which is far above money. But take another. Higher than intelligence or knowledge, as a gift from man to man, is moral inspiration. It is good to give a man a new idea, but surely it is better to give him a high mo-

tive. The motives of the noblest actions are lying all about us all the time. Men are too dull and gross to find them. As a man's nature becomes finer it becomes capable of transmitting pure and loftier impulses, and finding for them an entrance into the lives of other men. Thus it is that into a community that is all discouraged and demoralized there comes some bright, pure, simple-hearted man who believes in honesty and loves principles, and by and by the low tone of the men he lives among is shamed by him, and men catch his moral spirit and try to live like him. Has he not given them something better than money? Or a poor broken man comes to you when your purse is empty, and you are just going out to earn something for yourself, and you succeed in making him feel that it is better to earn than to beg; you succeed in touching the rusty key of his independence, and he goes back with a refreshed manhood, determined to help himself. Tell me, is there any comparison between what you have done for him and what you would have done if you could have filled his pockets with gold, and feasted his hunger off of silver dishes? And so to reawaken the sense of purity in a gross, licentious nature, breathing over the hot and lustful manhood a fresh, cool breeze out of the long-deserted mountains of his youth, to stir the impulse of honor in a crawling sycophant, to make a coward courageous or a scoffer reverent—these are greater gifts than money. These are greater even than the curing of diseases or the strengthening and straightening of cripples such as John and Peter met. And think

what poor people they are who may give gifts like these. Poverty itself gives the chance often for that fortitude that inspires other men to bear their trials. It is the broken windows out of which these lights shine. It is the look of a little child that often calls back purity or honor to a degenerate old man. It is not necessary to have anything, often it is not necessary even to do anything. It is only necessary to be good and brave and true and patient and we give our brethren gifts far beyond all value, great generous impulses and strong true principles.

3. And then, thirdly, comes sympathy! We know that there are times when any gift which can be measured by money-values becomes totally worthless. There are the times when you are in the deepest perplexity or the profoundest sorrow, when it would be insult and mockery for anybody to come to you and overwhelm you with the most enormous fortune that the country has to show. A man goes on heaping up his fortune, money seems to be his only craving. He works for it all the time he is awake and he dreams of it all the time he is asleep. He lives for it, and by the way in which he lavishes his health in its pursuit it seems as if he would die for it. And then all of a sudden some great sorrow comes to him, and how everything is altered! His child dies, and how the values of things are all confused in an instant! Money—his chest so full that he can bury and bathe his hands in gold—what is it worth? Men who can tell him nothing except how to make more money, what does he care for them? But out of utter obscurity comes someone—a pau-

per, perhaps, whom he has helped, a servant, it may be, who has crept unnoted about his house, a friend whom he has looked on with something like contempt, so utterly destitute was he of the power of wealth—and he brings the unutterable, the invaluable power of sympathy. He lets that stricken man know that one heart is bitterly sorry for his suffering, and by the strength of love he casts some light into the dark mystery that lies behind the sorrow. This is the power of sympathy. It includes both the other gifts of which we spoke. He who truly gives sympathy enlightens the intelligence and restrings the enfeebled moral nature of him with whom he sympathizes. But he does something more than this. He makes some personal bestowal of himself, of his own strength, his own life, into the weakness and deadness that he tries to help. It is indeed a wondrous gift for man to give to man.

4. But this is not all. A man gives to another man his ideas, his inspirations and his consolations, but if he is all that a man may be, then there is something more that he can give. If he has God, if he has taken Christ into his nature so that his life is a continual following of the Lord's, then see what a power of benefaction that man may have. It requires nothing great or exceptional in him. Certainly not great wealth. That has nothing whatever to do with it. Not great ability or knowledge, that has hardly more. Only the power to know God and to tell about him. The little Hebrew maiden is so humble that she may not even go to the great Syrian,

captive herself. She tells his wife, and the wife repeats it to her husband, "Would God my Lord were with the prophet"; and Naaman goes to God's prophet, and comes back with his new health again almost as if the proud man had taken it out of the maiden's little hand. History delights in the little insignificant people who have turned the world's tides; and religious history has nothing of which she so delights to tell as the way in which the little have been able to lead the great to Christ. For remember the Christian religion is Christ's friendship. We cannot come to any truer friend as we cannot find a simpler story to tell of it than that. The Christian who comes then with glowing face and says, "I wish that you would believe my Christ," has to bear witness to me only of one thing—that he has a human heart, and that that heart has found its satisfaction in the Christ to whom he invites me. His glowing face tells me both of these. All that is new in him bears witness that he has really found the great Renewer. I, wanting to be made new, arise and go and find Christ, and He does His blessed work for me. I cannot take that friend's faith for my own. When, finally, I stand with Christ and call Him mine, it is like those people of Samaria who said unto the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy word but we have seen Him ourselves"; but nevertheless do you think these men never thought of the woman as the one who had done for them the greatest thing that one human creature can do for another? She had introduced them to Jesus, and whoever does that for any

fellow-man, whoever by a Christian word he speaks or by a Christian life he lives, brings a new soul to see the perfect life and take the perfect grace, has poured out of his full hands a blessing on his brother that leaves utterly out of sight any gift that riches can bestow on poverty. It is terrible for a rich man to go through life and never have helped a poor man once out of his plenty, but it is far more terrible for a Christian to die without having brought any other soul to Christ.

See then what great gifts they can give who have no silver and no gold. See what bounty the souls of very poor men may lavish upon one another. Intelligence, inspiration, comfort, religion—these are the things which men are needing everywhere. Ignorant, spiritless, wretched, Christless lives are all about us. To help them, to give them what they want, we do not need to be rich. As much as these needs of theirs outgo their need of wealth, so much does the bounty that supplies these needs surpass the bounty that should simply spread their tables and fill their purses. O poor man, you who want to be charitable and seem to be shut out from the great privilege by your poverty, look up, take courage! Here is what you may do. Here is what you may give. Out of the free presence of God, out of that costless mercy of Christ which is yours always, you may gather these boons with which to satisfy your brother's wants. What a new life we should have, what a new world we should be if all men really were living to give these precious things to one another

It is not hard to see what it is that gives their superior value to these higher bounties. It is that the giver necessarily goes with them. Of all the worshippers who passed into the temple many a one may have dropt his bit of silver into the cripple's hand, but the silver was not the man, the man need not go with the silver. But when Peter and John came, and Peter gave him his health, that was not something that could be given like a bit of silver; Peter's own self, his heart, his soul, had to go out to the poor suppliant. We cannot but believe that he felt something of that mysterious experience which the great Healer uttered once when the poor woman touched His robe and He said, " Virtue is gone out of me."

And always, there can be no really precious gift either to giver or to taker, with which the self of the giver does not go. You remember, I am sure, the story that our poet has written of the young knight who rides out after the holy Grail, and as he goes flings a gold-piece to the beggar who sits beside his gate, and the beggar will not lift it from the dust, because it is only " worthless gold." But years pass by and when the weary Sir Launfal comes home, old and haggard, there sits the leper still, and then as the knight breaks his single crust and fills his wooden bowl out of the frozen stream and gives the beggar food and drink, the blessing comes to him; the holy Grail, which is Christ's Passover cup, is found, is the true act of charity, and the leper speaking with the voice of Christ—" the voice that is calmer than silence "—says, " Who gives

himself with his gift feeds three, himself, his hungering neighbor and me." It is sad indeed to think of how much money has been lavished which was only "worthless gold" because the self of the giver was not in it.

I think this lights up much about religion, about the gifts, that is, which God bestows on man. If it is true that man cannot give man his highest gifts unless he gives himself with them, then the same must be true of God. And every conception of religion which thinks of God as standing off and handing men from a distance bounties, however rich they might be, and does not make everything of the giving by God of Himself, His character, His love, with and in His gift, is radically wrong, is not the gospel. It is not that God gives us meat and drink, it is not even that He gives us forgiveness for our sins as a mere forensic and judicial act, it is not even that He gives us heaven as a mere place of delight, —these are not what bind us to Him and make us His. If He could give us any of these without giving us Himself, if He could spread our tables heartlessly, if He could forgive us, as men have sometimes talked, because some one had borne our penalty and forced forgiveness from His justice, if He could open the gates of pearl and not stand Himself with living heart to welcome us, none of these gifts would make us perfectly and permanently His. And if He could give us Himself and not give us some of these things, as sometimes He does give His very heart of hearts to a poor child of His who is struggling and starving, that gift

would satisfy the soul in lack of every outward blessing. No, it is true of God as it is of man,

> "That is no true alms which the hand can hold,
> He gives nothing but worthless gold
> Who gives from a sense of duty."

And such representations as many of our theologies contain of mercies and gifts extorted from God's reluctance by a hard necessity of justice, however they may be trying to tell one side of the story, cannot and do not picture the glory and the power of the Gospel, God's free gift of Himself to man.

The Incarnation was the great announcement of this truth. God had been giving men gifts through all the ages. He had dropped His bounties thick through all His people's history. Men had taken His bounties and thanked Him for them, but through them all they had not reached the certainty of God with them, of God giving Himself to them. And so He came. By every sacrifice, by every identification of Himself with the life that they were living, He gave them Himself. He was not satisfied until He was the gift, the very God given to man. Mysteriously, perfectly He put Himself into their nature.

And when He had come this same desire was always evident. Men often failed to reach it. They wanted gifts. "Give us bread," they cried, as they followed Him from place to place. "Nay, I am the bread," He answered, "take and eat me"! "Give me water," begged the woman of Samaria, "that I need not come to the well to draw." "The

water that I shall give him shall be in Him," Christ replied. He gave no money anywhere. What we call charity He could not give, silver and gold had He none. But knowledge, such as He gave to Nicodemus, inspiration such as He bestowed on the apostles, comfort such as He brought into the cottage at Bethany, the way to the Father as He opened it wide to the multitudes in the temple, these He was always giving. Himself, His divine self, He lavished on all who would receive Him.

And, brethren, the Incarnation is the Gospel still. We grow disappointed sometimes, perhaps, when we ask for God's gifts and they do not come. We ask for health, and God withholds it. We ask for wealth, and we go struggling on in poverty. We beg for pleasant homes, and the family life is broken up and scattered. We want long life, and death stands blankly in our way. We send up our prayer for peace, and anxieties come thickening around us. Let us remember always that these are God's gifts, but they are not God. Himself—His company, His love, His spirit—these are what we may be sure of. This is what He never will refuse. If any of the others stand in the way of this, He will brush them all ruthlessly aside that He may give Himself completely to the soul which, below and above all other needs, needs Him.

That Incarnation, my dear friends, must be our hope and blessing. But it must also be our pattern. O let us not think that we cannot share the self-sacrifice of God. What was it? It was the giving up of self-centred, isolated joy in order to bestow

Himself on man. The Son was in the bosom of the Father. The perfect life was his. Each infinite power in all its infinite delight knew no deficiency. All knowledge, all happiness, all love was there. What can we say but this, that He was God, and then He came to be a servant? He "was anointed to preach the Gospel to the poor, He was sent to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." Can we know anything of that? Can we do anything like that? Filled with his love and spirit, can we in any far-off way repeat that in ourselves? Wherever any man leaves his own self-contained life to go forth into the life of others, wherever any saint leaves his closet to go and tell the story of the Saviour, instead of merely pondering its sweetness by himself, wherever any scholar lets his self-culture go that he may lift a corner of the cloud of ignorance off of some benighted soul, wherever the missionary makes himself homeless that he may gather some of the Father's children into the eternal home,—there is the soul and spirit of the Incarnation. "As my Father hath sent me, so send I you," He said. We, too, may enter into the lot of other men as He entered into ours. He was not satisfied just to be God, he must give God. And whenever we are not satisfied merely to be wise or happy or holy, but must give wisdom and happiness and holiness, there is the soul and spirit of the Incarnation. It would have been so easy for God to open His hands and shower his bounty on the world, so that every

field should overrun with harvest and every mouth be fed with bread; and it is so easy for us to open our money-bags and give our money, but to come Himself and to be to men wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, nothing but that would satisfy Him. To go ourselves, to be one with the sufferer that we may help his suffering, one with the darkened that we may lighten his darkness, this is the only Christliness, the only complete living of the life of Christ.

We might follow it farther, we might say that as the true Godhood of the Saviour with all its holiness and joy was not lost by His entrance into humanity, so the self-culture and the happiness out of which you seem to depart in order to enter into the ignorance and misery of other men, is not in truth surrendered. Your own soul gathers a ripeness which it could not have had abiding alone, and the joy that you seemed to surrender is multiplied tenfold when you begin to seek not yourself but other men. "He that loseth his life finds it." He that gives up himself for the service of his brethren finds himself in the service of his brethren. Some of you know this by experience,—oh that all of you would really try it! For however it may puzzle us sometimes to apply it to the lower, the promise is always true about the higher things, "Give, and it shall be given unto you."

I have tried to open the door of charity to some to whom it has seemed to be shut tight. I am sure that there are many who as they go in and out at

the beautiful gate of the temple of a happy life are deeply oppressed at the sight of the many who lie crippled and miserable outside. They would like, they long to help them, but what can they do? Silver and gold they have none. I have tried to show that there are other things to give. Your intelligence, your principles, your comfort, your religion—in one word, yourself. The ways will open before you if you really want them. The first and deepest of all ways is to have a self, a strong, good, positive character. To be our best not merely for ourselves but for each other, that is a noble impulse; that, if it were fully carried out, would be the world's salvation. No man can really be strong and good without helping the world—

> "Not to scatter bread and gold,
> Goods and raiment bought and sold,
> But to hold fast his simple sense
> And speak the speech of innocence,
> And with hand and body and blood
> To make his bosom counsel good:
> For he that feeds men serveth few,
> He serves all who dares be true."

Let us be very thankful that no man is condemned to go uselessly through life, or to come before God at last without some souls that he has helped towards their Father.

IX.

THE DISPENSATION OF THE SPIRIT.

"In demonstration of the Spirit."—1 CORINTHIANS ii. 4.

TO every clear and sincere mind a demonstration is a most welcome thing. The moment which brings it is full of light and joy. To have it made absolutely certain that a thing is true, to have a fact set clearly in the mind's domain, never thereafter to be questioned or dislodged, that brings a sense of solidity and peace. The eye sparkles, the heart leaps, the feet are planted firm and strong when, at the end of a long process, the lines gather in to a conclusion, and the result is grasped and set firmly among the treasures of the mind. That fixed certainty becomes a new starting-point. The future opens out of it. Demonstrations which are yet unreached loom dimly in the distance. That which has been held loosely in the hand, not truly believed because we were not sure that it was sure, grows solid as we hold it, and out of its heart, when once we are assured of it, beat meanings which it could not give us while it was yet in doubt.

We all are holding propositions which yet wait for the hour of their demonstration. We think that

they are true, but we cannot give full and final reasons for our faith either to ourselves or to each other. It is like watching the east before the sunrise comes. At last the sun leaps from the horizon and the sky is bright. Then the clouds disappear. The darkness scatters. The eyes no longer wander here and there. They are fixed certainly on this new certainty. A new day has set itself firm in history. The proof is there round and red and radiant. The demonstration is complete.

But there are various kinds of demonstration according to the different kinds of truths and persons. St. Paul intimates this in the verse from which my text is taken. The whole verse reads thus: "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of men's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." He says that there was one method of demonstration which he had not used to make the Corinthians believe his truth, and another which he had used. The one which he had not used is clear enough—"Not with enticing words of men's wisdom," he declares. He had not been a teacher silencing dispute with arguments, compelling assent by the complete answer of every difficulty, leaving syllogisms in his hearers' minds by which they might convert any man they met upon the street. Something more subtle, more spiritual, more personal, than that had been his power. If he had had the choice of methods, he had chosen to make his message not an argument but a force. Indeed he feels as if he had had no choice. The nature of his message and the kind of his belief and the

needs of those to whom he came had made this the only possible kind of approach. And so he had come to them with what he calls the "demonstration of the spirit of power."

These three elements are what determine the character which every demonstration must assume. The nature of the teacher, the nature of the learner, and the nature of the message. And of the three the last is most despotic. A teacher may teach in various ways, a learner may be open upon various sides, but the message decrees its own method of impartation and will be imparted in no other. A problem in mathematics, for instance, is devoid of feeling. It presses on from its statement to its solution by a process purely of the reason. It depends entirely upon the clearness of its statement. It has no atmosphere. It is independent of times and places. It is precisely the same in the times of Euclid and in the times of Pierce. It might be spoken through a phonograph and would be as convincing as if it issued from the dearest human lips. A problem of natural history is proposed to the student who has been busy with his mathematics, and immediately he feels a difference. Here is another kind of subject, a new material, and, however it may seem to need only the powers of observation, it must inevitably suggest something of the mystery of richness of the nature which lives in such profound connection and sympathy with man. A question in human history involves still other elements. Man in all his complexity comes in. The doubtfulness of records, the doubtfulness of motives,

the prejudices of the speaker and the hearer—all these have to be taken into account, and though at last, as the result of all, the demonstration may be perfect and the conclusion may be irresistible, it has been reached in different ways and is of different value from the conclusions about mathematical truth or the phenomena of nature. I am as sure that Christ lived and was crucified in Jerusalem as I am of the sum of the angles of a triangle or of the earth's revolution on its axis, but my certainty comes to me in a different way, and is a separate and special possession of my mind, clothed in its own value, kept in its own treasury.

Every man's mind, because it is a distinct and individual thing has, of necessity, its choice among the various kinds of demonstration, and it is hard for almost every man to thoroughly believe that other kinds of surety are as absolutely sure as that in whose processes his own mind happens to delight. The mathematician accepts the naturalist's conclusions, but does not feel that they are quite as perfectly proved as are the formulas which he has worked out on his slate. The historian supposes that the metaphysician is right, but is puzzled by the absence of old chronicles which are the foundations on which his truth is built. But mankind as a whole is larger than any man, and humanity holds its various truth on various evidence, yet holds it all securely. It may feel sometimes that all demonstration has its weakness and its limits, that nothing is absolutely demonstrated in all the realm of truth. But in the actual conduct of life, however it may

be with men, man holds that there are various kinds of demonstration which bring various kinds of truth with practical certainty before the mind, and justify it in bidding the active powers go forward boldly and confidently upon its belief.

Let us beware of that especial bigotry which consists in giving value only to that particular kind of demonstration which appeals to our peculiar minds. Let us keep open, let us, if need be, force open all the doors through which truth comes to the human mind. Those doors all exist in every one of us, however it may be that only some of them have ever yet been opened in each man. Others there are, fixed fast with rust or overgrown with vines, and looking like a portion of the solid wall, yet capable of being opened and of letting in some truth of which our souls have need.

With all this clear in our minds, our next step is to recognize that, while every kind of truth has its own kind of demonstration, there are yet great general lines, running through the whole mass of truth, and dividing it into groups, to each of which in general some method of demonstration will belong. The kinds of truth which I have used as illustrations appeal either, as in the case of mathematics, to pure reason, or, as in the case of history, to human testimony. There are, however, other kinds of truth which for their demonstration and acceptance demand something different. They ask for spiritual conditions, for a certain spiritual atmosphere through which the evidence of their truth can be sent and received. They demand personal qualities in him

who utters them and in him who hears. Let me remind you what some of the truths of this sort are.

1. Take first the truth of beauty. "This statue is beautiful," we say. How do we know that? No argument can prove it to us, so that the conviction of its beauty becomes really our possession. No authority can make us sure of it. No man can tell us it is beautiful and by his mere telling make our hearts believe. It must tell us its own wondrous tale. It must speak itself directly to our souls. It must find perceptions in us and claim them. Arguments may come in afterwards to analyze and justify our love. Authority may reassure us by letting us know that other men have felt the power that we feel. But the essential demonstration must come directly from the beautiful thing to our power of perceiving beauty. The spiritual must be spiritually discerned.

2. Or, take the truth that any particular course of action is right or wrong. The real, vital demonstration of that truth must spring like a sunbeam directly from the heart of the action to our moral sense. You cannot prove it in the literal and ordinary way. Any attempt to reduce its demonstration to a syllogism degrades its character. The authority of every living man may pronounce the action to be right, and yet my moral sense may tell me absolutely that it is wrong. It is spirit speaking to spirit, the spirit of the action to the spirit of the man. Into the stirred conscience falls the shadow of the deed, and the conscience instantly declares its verdict; and the man is sure.

3. Or, take the truth that any character is noble or ignoble, fine or mean. Prove me that this your friend deserves your confidence, state me the argument which justifies the flashing eye with which you kindle at one of the spell-working names of history. Who told you that that deed of the hero was a glorious thing? How your soul scorns all such appeals! "I know it," you declare, "I know it as I know the sun. That is enough. There is that in me which catches and holds such nobleness as the eye catches the landscape, as the hand grasps the stone. It is mine because I am I and it is it."

4. And, what is still more striking, think of the subtler fact of the affections. Who ever reasons to himself that he should love? Or, yet more, who ever lives upon authority, because some one who knows has told him that this fellow-life is lovable? It is life bearing direct testimony of itself to life that makes the demonstration. The nature and conditions of the two lives are all-important elements, and affection leaps from one to the other as fire leaps from wood to wood.

In all these illustrations what we see is this—that there are kinds of truth which make demonstration of themselves not by the pure reason nor by authority, but by direct spiritual testimony, borne immediately from the nature of the truth to the nature of the receptive and believing man.

The first thing of which we have to assure ourselves is that this is true demonstration. We may not institute comparisons and say whether it is true or less true than other kinds of demonstration which

are appropriate to other kinds of truth. Enough that this kind is genuine and real, a solid, strong foundation on which a genuine belief may rest.

And then we are prepared to turn to Paul and see how exactly it is on this foundation that he says he has built his claim that the Corinthians should take his gospel. "Not with enticing words of men's wisdom, but by demonstration of the Spirit." "By demonstration of the Spirit"! Could any words more perfectly tell that which I have been trying at such length to describe? Paul says that what he brought one day into the bright gate of the brilliant city was not an argument to which convinced reason must give its assent, and not a commandment to which the tyrant's authority should compel obedience, but a new presence which should claim their spirits, a soul which their souls should recognize and love. We may almost see it stated in the terms of the successive illustrations which I used just now. He brought a beauty which appealed to their spiritual perceptions and demanded and received their recognition. He brought a righteousness which their consciences knew and stood up upon its feet to honor. He brought a character into whose eyes they looked and felt the essential nobility of life. He brought a Friend whom their hearts loved.

How the description takes us back to the old vanished city. It is all gone. There on the isthmus between the two blue gulfs stand a few columns of a Doric temple which alone are left of the great splendid city. A modern town of squalid huts has taken the place of the old palaces. Above, to the

blue sky, soars the great hill, the Acrocorinthus, which seeks in vain at its feet the gorgeous metropolis that it guarded so long. It is all gone, and yet how the life which souls lived there comes back! Behold, here it was that the great Christian apostle came "with demonstration of the Spirit." Men met him on the street and their souls stirred in their sleep. He spoke a few words of his Christ and their closed doors flew open. Here men and women came to life. Here the Christ who stood in the person of His servant was "received," and to the man who received Him—some poor forgotten dead Corinthian—gave the glorious "power to become the Son of God."

And are we ready now to take the next step? Nay, have we not already taken it? When Paul declared how he came to the Corinthians, he was not merely telling a bit of his biography, he was declaring also the perpetual and universal method of the Christian faith. As he came into Corinth so the Gospel always comes to men. "In demonstration of the Spirit," whatever else we know or fail to know about it, we must know this first truth of the character of the demonstration which the Gospel makes, or we are all wrong. Because so many men have not known this they have been all wrong when they have talked about the Christian faith and its acceptance or rejection by mankind. "In demonstration of the Spirit." The other demonstrations have their place and their relation to it. The demonstration of argument and reason has its work to do as it establishes the facts of Christian history,

declares the character of the great Christian Book, and finds the relations in which Christian truth stands to all the truth which man knows everywhere. Authority comes in and testifies to the acceptance of those truths in every age. But when the work of reason and authority is complete, what have they done? They have built a platform down which comes a moving presence, strong, gracious, imperious with love, majestic with holiness—the Christ coming to claim the soul. He can come over the rudest and most fragmentary evidence, over the most trembling and unobstructed testimony. Nay, He can come, we believe, without argument and without testimony, manifesting Himself essentially even to souls which have never heard His name, and which can offer neither description nor vindication of His power. Even so He can come, and, as a nameless influence, a friend felt but not known, can teach and help and save the soul. But He must come. The best-built platform does but make His coming easier and more complete. It cannot make His coming needless.

Because this has not been made and kept always clear Christianity has suffered in every way. Let us make it perfectly clear to our souls if we can. Your friend approaches you with all the proof of Christianity entirely complete. There is not left a single doubt. You are perfectly convinced. Are you a Christian? No! You believe as Jesus terribly said that the devils do. Another friend comes to you and in some rich way opens your soul to Christ. With multitudes of questions about Him still unan-

swered, with a strange incapacity to sweep a definition round His life, Christ, the great spiritual presence, is with you through something which that friend has done. Are you a Christian? Yes! Beyond all doubt. You will be more a Christian when through the opened spiritual nature more of Christ comes in to you. But you are a Christian now! Nothing can make you more a Christian except what comes in through your spiritual apprehension. No amount of truth believed which is not transmuted into spiritual life and power enriches your Christian character. The soul, the soul alone it is which is capable of Christian life. Whatever does not reach the soul falls short. And nothing but soul can reach the soul. Therefore it is always, as it was in the days of St. Paul, in demonstration of the Spirit that the Christ must come.

There are two representations of what I have been saying—or, perhaps, it would be more proper to call them two inferences from it—which we want most distinctly to discern. They are not part of our doctrine. They are wholly foreign to and inconsistent with it. The first of them is the idea that, since the birth of Christian life comes only by the meeting of soul with soul, therefore everything else, all the external facts of Christianity, are insignificant and unimportant; which is very much as if one said that since the railroad tracks never yet made a journey, therefore they were of no use and the engine might go its way and reach its destination as well without as with them. The facts of Christian history give their direction to the spiritual power. He who

knows what Christ has done knows what Christ is. And he who knows what Christ is, is ready for Christ's power on his soul.

The other idea is that all this teaching reduces the whole matter of Christian evidence to the soul's choice and whim. If nothing can be received as true but what the soul accepts, it is easy to go on and say that whatever the soul accepts may be received as true, and then to add still further that the only reason for accepting any religious truth as true is that the soul desires it. "I know that this is true because I want it to be true." What shall we say of such a method. Strangely enough, there is a certain truth in it, as there is in the most erroneous error. It always has been recognized that what the human soul deeply and permanently and universally desires carries in the very fact of that desire a certain presumption of its really existing. The being of God, the immutablity of the soul—these great beliefs have always found part of their warrant for their truth in the way in which the soul of man everywhere has claimed a Father, and the human nature has refused to think that it must die at death. It may be that if the human soul could be certainly known to be free from all obscurity and prejudice, entirely and purely itself, and if its testimony were absolutely unanimous and universal, the witness it might bear would be enough for any truth to rest upon. But now it can set forward no such claim. We do not hold the truths of our faith to be true because we want them to be true. We hold them on their proper and sufficient evidence. But they

are of such a nature that we could not hold them upon any evidence if they did not find and satisfy our spiritual natures. That is a difference which any thoughtful man can surely understand.

We talk about ourselves—we talk about St. Paul —but who are we or who is he that in any one less than the greatest we should seek and find the type of Christian power? How was it in Jesus? Was it not absolutely and manifestly true that in Him the power of God was not an argument and not a commandment, but a spiritual force. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, so is every man that is born of the Spirit." Those were His words to Nicodemus. Why did Peter and John believe Him when He stood by the lakeside in the clear morning and called them? Why did the Magdalen believe Him when He bent over her bowed agony and pitied her? Why did Lazarus believe Him when through the grave clothes which bound the poor dead face the voice came piercing with the summons to arise? It was because He was a force. It was by demonstration of the Spirit.

O Peter, Magdalen, Lazarus, that force, that divine spiritual force is in the world to-day! The wind still blows out of the treasuries of God. The Christ still touches souls which will be touched to life. Only (and this is the outcome of what I have been saying to those who are the receivers of the influence He brings) the soul must be confederate with the force, or even the divine force is helpless. You may muffle yourself in worldliness and yet understand an argument. You cannot muffle your-

self in worldliness and yet be responsive to a love. Oh, it is terrible, the way in which men and women stand wrapped in their selfishness and say, "Why does not Christ soften and convert me?" He cannot, so long as you hide yourself in your selfishness. He can and He will the moment that you tear yourself open and want Him, and want what He wants. Then to you who receive Him He gives the glorious power to become the child of God. It may be that that is being done here now. If it is, this is indeed a holy place, a holy hour.

And who are you who wish and pray that you might be the medium through which the Christian life may come to some one who is needing it, perhaps needing it all the more because he does not know his need? What you require to know (and this is the outcome of what I have been saying to those who are the givers of the influence of Christ) is that it is through the spiritual life that your influence must move. How great a strength there comes with that assurance! You say, "I cannot argue down these strong objections; I am not wise enough to prove that I am right. That of which I am spiritually sure I cannot argumentatively sustain." What then? In quietness and confidence must be your strength. If you cannot argue, live! Conviction comes through argument, but life comes through life. Fathers and mothers with your children, students among your fellow-students, clerks in the great store, men and women in the great world, this is what lies open to you all—the demonstration of the Spirit. Be true and pure and lofty

and devout, and He who ever seeks the souls of men shall find His way to some of them through you.

Among the Christian doctrines the one which many Christians find it harder to give an account of to themselves than any other is perhaps the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. They hear about the dispensation of the Holy Spirit,—that we are living in it now, that it is to go on, growing and growing, until it shall take possession of all life. I should be glad to think that what I have said this afternoon might do a little something to make clearer what the dispensation of the Holy Spirit is. Can you picture to yourself a world where every soul should bear direct witness of itself to every other, the great communication being that which the soul of God bears to them all,—their own communications to each other being indeed only the reflections of His utterance, as the colors with which objects shine on each other are but expressions of the light with which the sun shines on all. Every nature is spoken to directly by the perfect nature, and every nature spontaneously and naturally tells its best messages to all the other natures. It is like a room through whose heated atmosphere fire leaps instantly from fuel to fuel, and the flame springs everywhere at once. In such a world two things are true,—the will of God is felt everywhere as the moving spirit of it all, and what one soul possesses of strength and truth becomes the true possession of the whole —openness and sympathy! In such a world, when it is complete, there is no jealous hoarding of the good which any nature has; nor, on the other hand

is there a frenzied eagerness and restless craving to express, as if expression were an unnatural thing; but steadily, certainly, calmly, each soul bears witness of itself by its very being, as a star shines, and in the demonstration of the Spirit the power of good influence distributes and reduplicates itself on every side. That is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

In such a world the power of evil influence repeats itself as well as the power of good. The baleful flame leaps through the heated air as easily as does the fire of God. And so the struggle of the evil and the good with one another grows more tense and terrible. And therefore nearer draws the day when the good, because it is divine, shall conquer and cast out the evil.

Are we indeed living in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit? And is it ripening towards the fullness of its power? We must not take our judgment from a few short years. We must look widely over all the long reach of Christendom; and when we do look so I do not see how we can help discerning these two great spiritual qualities, openness and sympathy,—openness to receive influences from above and from below, and sympathy to make the wealth of one the wealth of all;—discerning, I say, these two filling all Christian history as they have never filled the history of heathen times. There is a great community of life. There is a spirit of the time. There is a sense of mutual responsibility, and there is a fierceness of conflict between spiritual forces, which makes Christian history so critical, so splendid, and so terrible.

All that is destined to increase and grow. The dispensation of the Spirit is to deepen as the years go on. The demonstration of the Spirit is to become more rich and universal. The strife of good and evil is to become more furious. The atmosphere of life is to wax more intense. What any one man is will grow more and more critical for other men. The individual and the race will tell more and more immediately and powerfully upon each other. And into this opened sympathetic life God will pour His power with more rich profusion and a freer and freer bestowal of Himself.

In such a world it is a privilege to live. In such a world—let this be the closing earnest exhortation of my sermon—in such a world it is a more and more dreadful thing to be a trifler. It is a more and more blessed thing to be brave and sincere. O my brethren, live nobly in these noble times! It matters little whether your field of activity be great or small. Only, do not be mean! Do not be cowards! Do not be false! Love God. Serve God. Make your life such that He can shine through you. There is no little. There is no great. But everywhere there is a good, there is a bad. God save us from the bad! God help us to the good, and give us all the right to say humbly at the last that which His Son our Saviour said, "I have glorified Thee on the earth!"

X.

THE GLORY OF SIMPLICITY.

"But let your communication be 'Yea, yea; 'Nay, nay': for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."—MATTHEW v. 37.

THIS is the Quaker's verse. It is associated always with the spirit and the habits of that interesting company of men and women who have devoted themselves to the cultivation of simplicity, and have enthroned quietude and peace as the gentle and mighty monarchs of their life. And yet it must not be their verse alone. No grace and no condition can be given up to any one group of men as if it belonged to them exclusively. No doubt, as Christendom divides itself at present, it is true that each of the groups or sects into which it is divided is notable for the preëminence of some one quality, or ambition, or form of Christian thought, but evidently it holds that special treasure by no exclusive charter. It holds it in trust and charge for all the rest. It is almost as if each of these groups were a peculiar garden into which each new plant that was to be acclimated and appropriated into the great kingdom of the Christian life were brought for special cultivation. There it is made much of, and surrounded by the best conditions, and guarded

from the dangers which most easily beset it. The walls are built to keep away the winds which this plant dreads. The streams bring it the water which it most loves. The gardeners of that special garden studies its peculiar character and habits. In every way that garden devotes itself to that one plant, but it is not because the plant belongs to that one garden and to it alone. It is the property of all the kingdom; and by and by, when the nursery has done its work and the plant is thoroughly naturalized and acclimated, it is sent abroad and blooms on every hillside and in every valley through the land. So it is when a particular quality or a particular truth is committed to a certain church or to a certain age to cultivate. It belongs to universal life—to all the churches and to all the ages. It is but trusted to this special group for special cultivation. All the time that it is being specially cultivated there it is flourishing also as it may in all the larger world; and by and by the special cultivation sends it out into the larger world to be the property and portion of the whole. Therefore it is not for itself alone, but for all Christendom and all mankind, that Quakerism has made its assertion and cultivation of simplicity.

I want to speak this morning about the glory of simplicity. All life continually tends to complication. It is so with the individual life as it grows up from youth to manhood. It is so with the corporate life of men as it grows more and more highly civilized. Where is the man who does not look back to his youth and think how few were the things which he had then to do, how uncomplicated were

the arrangements which he had then to make, compared with the intricate confusion which fills his life to-day? And where is the community which does not look back with longing to the primitive standards and natural habits in which history tells it that its fathers lived only a few short centuries ago? When Jesus came into Jerusalem He found this complication flourishing abundantly about Him. Elaborateness was everywhere. Great, tedious ceremonials occupied the temple service. Long lists of rules and arbitrary laws had overspread the simplicity of the ten commandments. Society was a most intricate system of castes and classes. Thought, as the Rabbis guided it, turned and twisted and retwisted on itself in endless subtleties. Every hair had to be split and split again. Every definition had to be defined and re-defined a thousand times. Now there are various indications in the Gospels that the Jews wanted Jesus to accept this system of things, and to come in among them and join in their hair-splitting, and be a Rabbi like themselves. But the glory of His conduct, the testimony of His divinity, was that He refused. He struck this whole mass of complication and elaboration aside, and set a few big, broad simple truths and laws in the place which they had occupied, and bade them reflect the broad sunshine of God; and so He saved the world.

What He did all the great teachers and saviours of the world have done. They have all been simplifiers. The second order of the world's helpers has been largely made of those who brought in some

new bit of helpfulness, and so added to the complication of which the world is full. But the first order of helpful men, to which but few of the greatest of mankind belong, has been made up of those who so asserted and illuminated and glorified and made powerful the eternal, elementary truths and forces that they stood out sufficient and alone, and burnt up, as it were, all the half-lights and pale reflections of themselves of which the sky had become full.

How passionate sometimes in the midst of the most beautiful and interesting of complicated life becomes this craving for simplicity! What strange forms of exhibition it assumes! The youth leaves impatiently the gilded and cushioned luxury where he was born and bred, and is found by and by in the depths of the prairies herding his cattle like a true son of Adam. The man of many learnings casts his many books away and goes to some manual toil which seems to bring him back to the hard primitive things by whose touch he reclaims the earth and identifies himself as man. The king disappears from the throne, and his voice is heard chanting in the cloister. The woman turns from the complicated whirl of society and becomes the sister of charity The connoisseur sweeps all the accumulated bric-à-brac of a lifetime away and sits down to ponder on one single statue or to fathom the secret of a single picture, or takes refuge in the loveliness of nature which lies behind all the pictures. Everywhere this craving for simplicity is at the bottom of all complication. The barbarian is at the heart of every son of civilization. The fresh morn-

ing is within the hot bosom of every noon, filling it with dim aspirations and regrets and hopes.

But all is not said when we say this. Still, sing the praises of simplicity as loudly as we will, the question comes most urgently "What kind of simplicity is possible for a man or for a race which has once left the primary simplicity behind and developed into the elaborate conditions of ripened life?" It cannot be the old simplicity back again just as it used to be. The full-blown rose can never fold itself into a bud again. The world is never going to tear down its cities, and dress itself once more in bearskins, and take to the wigwams and the woods again. And if a man or two leaves the study for the workshop or the palace for the monastery, we are almost sure that they find they have carried within them the complication away from which they ran; and that while their hands are busy at the primary toils of man, their hearts are tossed and crossed with the old problems and contradictions which they brought with them out of the heart of their puzzled books or of the tumultuous world. No, it is not by any mere reversion to a long-past childhood that the man's life or the world's life is to be simplified again. That is all past and over. It never can return. And by the same token it cannot be by mere excision and exclusion till, interest after interest being lopped away, only one or two interests are left. That will not do. You do not truly make life simple by making it meagre. It is as if you tried to simplify a tree by cutting off its branches. You either kill the tree and it is a tree no longer, or else, if it still lives, it

instantly puts forth new branches and the old complication is there again before you know. Not so! Not so! It is not by excision and rejection that the simplicity of life is gained. The unity which comes by meagreness is far too dearly bought and is not really unity.

And how, then, can it come? Is not its method felt in those deep words of Jesus, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you?" Seek ye the centre and ye shall possess the sphere.

There is a great principle, a great truth, large enough, elementary, absolute, universal enough to enclose and enfold all the fragmentariness of living and make life one. "The kingdom of God and His righteousness," so Jesus calls it. It is the fact of the power and the goodness of God, the fact that the good God is king, which is able thus to embrace all life and make it one. Take a king out of a kingdom and it falls to pieces. He is at once its centre and its envelope. By his force within it and his pressure round it he holds it into unity; and all its parts within it freely play without disturbing its simplicity.

What is the meaning of this religiously to us? If we believe in God, if God is a reality to us, our life is not distracted whatever be the multiplicity of its details. You are a score of things, and life seems to be pulled a score of ways by the conflicting claims of the score of things you are. Your family pulls you one way and your business another, and your ambition another, and by and by one fragment of

you is working here and another there; and your self, that core and heart of you which cannot be torn apart by any distraction, is flying and rushing here and there, and trying to regulate and rule these tumultuous kingdoms, and failing always. What then? Can you believe in God? Do you know that He loves you? Do you know that you are His? If you do, the moment that you do, it is as if a great hand was put underneath and around all this complexity and distraction, and—without any true part of your life being crowded out, all being kept complete—the whole was gently, strongly pressed into a whole, a unit. One motive fills all these parts of life, and they become harmonious. One love pervades them and they love each other. The simplicity of a system asserts itself—a simplicity like the God's from whom it comes—so that as we declare of Him, in the same way the harmonized parts of us declare of us, "In Him we live and move and have our being." Each man is a true universe, a cosmos, an order all the more simple for its complexity of parts.

Do you know what this means? Indeed you must know, or else you have got to do one or other of two things. Either you have got to strip piece after piece, interest after interest, of your life away until you attain the meagre simplicity of the unorganized atom; or else you have got to give up the hope and thought of all simplicity, and just lie loose and dejected—a score of pieces of a man, each running independently and spasmodically, but not one man at all. You cannot do either of these things,

and so you must come to the simplicity of the child of God.

Thus I have tried to describe the only method of simplicity which lies open to the life of the busy and thoughtful man, the man who cannot starve his life into meagreness, and at the same time cannot be satisfied with mere multitudinousness of life which has no principle of unity.

And now let us see how such a simplicity as that, when it has entered into a man's life, satisfies and fills and rules it. Here is a growing and expanding nature. It is always reaching forward, always desiring to be more and to do more to-morrow than to-day. Now the question of that nature's activity will practically be this: whether it shall expand itself by leaving the old and going abroad to find new things for its possession, or by more and more complete possession of the things it has. The first is the method of ever-increasing complication. The second is the method of perpetual simplicity. The first is full of restlessness, the second is all calm.

Do we not know the difference? How many of our lives are feverish with the perpetual search after new things when the things which we have now have not begun to be exhausted. We are like children with our houses strewn with half-read books and half-played games and half-eaten fruit; who stand at the doorway crying out into the open world for more instead of giving ourselves to the richer uses of what we have already.

The reason of such a state of things must be either that what we already have is not large enough and

rich enough, or that its largeness and richness have not been enough apprehended by us. We have not found our simplicity in God. If we had we should never dream of exhaustion.

The clear illustration of this I find in the New Testament. Christ comes and preaches, the new teacher, the great revealer of the truth of God to man. I think that all men have been surprised sometimes at what seemed the simplicity, almost the meagreness, of the teachings of Jesus. There are such multitudes of questions for which every philosopher has had his answer, but which Christ never touches. There are such wide regions of curious speculation where all our feet insist on wandering, but which He never enters. Think of what we should have expected. "He is coming to us direct from God. Now we shall know everything. He will tell us everything." But, on the contrary, how was it? How calmly the old truths fell from His lips! What richness and novelty opened in them as He spoke them! How, to those who heard with ears worthy of the lips with which He spoke, the old truths—the truths of God and the soul and immortality—became enough, so deep they grew as He proclaimed them! What need was there for Him to go afield for far-fetched truths, when right here at His feet the old world was so rich? It is His simple "Yea, yea," spoken of the eternal verities which the world has always seemed to know, that has flooded the world with new light and salvation.

Wonderful is he who takes us by the hand and

leads us into regions of whose very existence we had not known before. This wonderfulness there is certainly in Jesus. More wonderful still is He who on the old ground where we stand bids the mine open and the diamond shine, bids the fountain burst and the waters flow; and it is this wonderfulness that makes Jesus truly and entirely the Saviour of the world.

Again, think how men use their Bibles. There are so many of the Bible students who are forever finding obscure, difficult, out-of-the-way passages, and treating them as if they had the marrow and substance of the Gospel in them. Some mystic verse in St. John's revelation, some occult computation from the prophecy of Daniel, has often so taken possession of a man or of a sect that all the great remainder of the Bible seemed to fade back into insignificance. It was as if these readers had exhausted all that the great, simple, healthy Gospels had to say, and had nothing left to listen to except this enigmatical and dubious voice speaking out of the darkness in a language which no man could understand. Very often it has seemed as if "knowledge of the Bible" consisted in the possession of theories regarding such comet-like texts which shoot across the sky of Revelation, rather than devout intimacy with the majestic simplicity of the revelation of God and the revelation of man, which are the tranquil stars that burn always and lighten all the heavens.

Indeed, one of the strange things in the whole history of Christianity has been the way in which

many souls have seemed not merely to miss but to prefer to miss its great simplicity. What an amount of reverent and devoted study has been given to strange doctrines, such as the doctrine of the historic fall of man, or the doctrine of the second advent of the Saviour, or the doctrine of the correspondence of the types of the Old Testament with the events of the New, or the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ. Men's minds have hovered around them with a strange, unhealthy fascination. Theories have risen from them like mists out of dim fields, often very beautiful, as beautiful as they were thin and unsubstantial; while all the time the great solid truths, of man's divine lineage and God's much-manifested love and Christ's redemption of the soul by sacrifice have lain, not denied, but unopened, unsounded for the depths of unfound richness that is in them. I am sure that much of the character of a Christian's faith may be tested by its simplicity, by whether he finds abundant richness in the great, primary fundamental truths or whether his mind wanders among fantastic doctrines, and values ideas not for their naturalness but for their strangeness; not for the way in which they satisfy and feed, but for the way in which they startle and surprise the human soul.

There is no region in which all this is more true than in men's speculation about the life which lies beyond the grave. Nowhere does the difference between the healthiness of simplicity and the unhealthiness of complicated and elaborate curiosity so visibly appear. People who hardly believe that

there is such a thing as a future life at all will speculate on its details, will sit holding their breath while mediums who have no touch of common sympathy try to bring souls together in carnal manifestation, whose intimacy is too sacred for any but themselves to share. It is not this that brings comfort and peace. It is not this that lifts the souls on earth to live already the divine life which their kindred souls are living in the celestial world. No morbid dream of knowledge which is not for me, no fancied sight into the detailed occupations of the spiritual life—only the great, broad, simple certainty that the friend I love is in the perfect company and care, is held fast in the tender and majestic love of God—only this I want to satisfy my soul. The Bible tells us one thing—only one—about the dead who have passed out of our sight. They are with God. How simple that is! How sufficient it becomes! How cheap and tawdry, as we dwell in it, it makes the guesses and conceits with which men try to make real to themselves what the dead are doing! They are with God. Their occupations are ineffable. No tongue can tell their new, untasted joy. The scenery in the midst of which they live speaks to the spirit with voices which no words born of the senses can describe. But the companionship and care,—those are the precious, those are the intelligible things. The dead are with God. O you who miss even to-day the sound of the familiar voices, the sight of the dear, familiar faces, believe and be more than satisfied with that.

There is no sign of ripening life which is more

gracious and more beautiful than the capacity and disposition to find richness in the simplest and healthiest associations. Have you never had an experience like this ? Have you never had a friend whom you have long known, in whom you found much to enjoy and to be grateful for, but whom at last you seemed to have exhausted and outgrown ? You went abroad to natures which fascinated you more. You felt the power of some man in whom there was some sort of one-sided and fantastic power, in whom there was more violence of light and shade, in whom the very manifestness of defect made certain promontories of possession peculiarly picturesque and attractive. You revelled in his strange unhealthy power. Something, it may be, almost weird came out in yourself to answer his romantic inspiration. But by and by he too failed you and did not satisfy. Some morning that which had been so dramatic looked only theatrical to you. His high lights and great gulfs of darkness wearied you. And then have you never turned back to the simplicity of your first friendship, and found to your amazement how unexhausted, how inexhaustible it was ? There stood the deep, quiet nature on whose surface you had scratched and fumbled, but where profoundness lay yet all untouched. His healthiness refreshed you as if you came out of a torch-lighted cavern into the sunlight and the breeze. His calm "Yea, yea ; nay, nay," truthful and strong, swept all the frantic extravagances and overstrained exaggerations out of your soul, and you rejoiced in a great cleanness and freshness. Giving

yourself to him again you found him opening to you treasures which you never found before,—as men come back with the tools of civilization in their hands, and work great wealth of gold out of the mines which their barbarian ancestors thought they had exhausted ages ago.

Sometimes the truth about God and His relation to our human life seems to shape itself exactly into this, that He stands waiting, in infinite patience, till His children out of their restlessness and wanderings come back to find the satisfaction of their souls in Him. We just touch Him in our childhood; our first implicit faith gets just the surface blessings of His love, as the childish savages gather the grains of gold which lie shining on the surface of the ground. Then we go off, fascinated by some eccentric, tumultuous utterance of power, and we give ourselves up to some passion for the distorted or unreal. We make long journeys in search of bags of gold which spirits tells us that the genii have hidden in the holes of rocks across the seas; and all the while there lies the mine with its good, hidden gold. All the while there waits God with His great satisfaction for the soul of man; and some day we come to ourself and say "I will arise and go to my Father." Some day the false lights fade, the partial shows its partialness. Out of the depth of the earth where the gold is hidden the call sounds, "Come unto me." Out of the healthiness of the divine life our hearts recognize the summons as we come back to the God we thought we had exhausted, forsooth, when we left Him in our nursery, and find in humiliation and

in joy that He is the strength of our life and "our portion forever," that which eternity itself cannot exhaust.

God is so healthy. That is indeed the meaning of His holiness. In Him no part or quality grows tyrannical over the rest. In His timeless existence the present cannot be sacrificed to the future, nor the future to the present. The eternal necessities are in Him, so that He does not submit His will to them; they are His will. His Yea and Nay are the creations and distinctions of the world. When He says to your disturbed, distracted, restless soul, or mine, "Come unto me," He is saying, come out of the strife and doubt and struggle of what is at the moment where you stand, into that which was and is and is to be,—the eternal, the essential, the absolute. Let go the fascination of the unhealthy and the exceptional, come to the everlasting health, the great natural and normal life which lies under the fretfulness of living as the great sea underlies the fretful waves,—"Come unto me."

Even in regions which we do not call religious, we recognize this power of the absolute and simple to call souls to itself; and we see how the truest souls are they who answer to the call, and how the souls which answer to the call become the truest. The healthiness and simplicity of the highest genius is remarkable. Genius of the second rank may be fantastical, complicated, living in regions of its own, lighted by fitful stars of morbid fascinating brilliance; but genius of the first order, the few very highest souls—Shakespeare, Plato, and Homer—live in the

universal light and air. They speak intelligently to their fellow-men. They shine with a true, colorless light. They move upon the world like the true air of heaven. Their "yea" and "nay" are inexhaustible because they are the essential affirmations and denials of the universe; they are the positives and negatives of the eternal truth. Therefore it is that we come back to them for peace and highest inspiration out of the turmoil of excited literature which eddies and foams about us, and tosses us to distraction. Therefore it is that men of their quality, however small they may be, have always life-giving and peace-giving power; and men turn back to the man who is simple, broad, healthy, and true, as the sailor who has rejoiced in the contortions and distractions of the sea, turns, when the twilight comes, to the peace of the deep-rooted shore and the rest of the meadows where the flowers grow out of the unmeasured depth of fruitful earth.

Thus we talk of the simplicity of God, thus we talk of the simplicity of the profoundest and truest men. It is the exhibition of both of these simplicities which we behold in Jesus, and which makes His healthiness, His holiness. One of the noblest signs of how true our human nature is at the bottom is the way in which, notwithstanding all the fascination which the unhealthy forms of power have had for men, the strongest hold that ever has been laid upon the human heart has been laid there by the simple, healthy Christ. It is not His miracles, it is His nature which holds the world and will not let it go. Men are shouting and scream-

ing all about Him with their partial truths, their temporary standards, their intoxicated joys, their frantic and galvanic shows of power. You are wondering to which fanaticism you shall give up your life, which form of unhealthy thought or action you shall make your own, since it seems as if only in unhealthiness was power or joy to be attained; and just then, when you are all ready to throw yourself into the fire of some frenzy, Jesus steps before you and says, "Give yourself to Me"; and then, looking into His face, you see that there is your true master. For look, what it will be to serve Him. He never will ask you to distort a truth even for the very highest purpose. He never will ask you to do wrong to-day that you or other men may do right to-morrow. He not merely will not tempt you, He will not allow you to bring the high standards of living down to what seem the powers of your life. He will bid you trust your fellow-men and not suspect them; assuring you that it is better to be cheated a hundred times and to be imposed upon continually than to fail to help one soul which you might help, or to shut the door of the better life in the face of any child of God who is trying to come in. Above all, He will open to you the great simple sources of truth and power, and make them the exhaustless feeders of your soul. These things He has done wherever souls have got genuinely and thoroughly at Him. Sometimes His church has not done these things for men. Sometimes she has done just the opposite of these things. But wherever His church has really brought Him and men

together, and wherever He and men have ever really met, this has been always the result. He has done for them all these things, and the great outcome of it all has been that their lives have grown healthy and grown natural. The fantastic has been cast out. They have felt and known themselves in as true relations to the earth they lived on as its mountains or its trees. And so peace has come to them, and with peace, power.

My friends, the world we live in, the time and town we live in, are full of unhealthiness. There are exaggerations, affectations, complications, thin frenzies, theatrical excitement, fashions of passions, conventionalities of unconventionalities, till our souls grow sick and tired of it all. Where is the escape from it? Only in what St. Paul calls "The simplicity which is in Christ." Go up into the mountain of His love and service, and you shall leave all these mists and fogs below. Drink of the water that He shall give you, and "it shall be in you a fountain of living water, springing up to everlasting life." That is the true health of the soul. May we all come to it by Him!

XI.

THE LITTLE SANCTUARIES OF LIFE.

"Thus saith the Lord, Though I have cast them far away among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come."—EZEKIEL xi. 16.

THE prophet stood, as it were, upon the heights of Hebrew history and pointed to the disastrous exile. Yet into the cloud of the exile he sent the sunbeam of a promise. We may try to realize and understand that promise, not as it issued from the prophet's lips, but as the exiled Jew laid claim to it in his necessity and distress in Babylon. The child of Israel has left Jerusalem behind. He has travelled far away from the holy city. As he took his departure he paused and lingered on the Mount of Olives, and looked back on the great temple which he was to see no more. There it stood in all its sacred splendor. It was the holiest spot of all the earth to him. It was the seat of his Jehovah's presence. By rite and symbol, by decoration and image, the sign was given everywhere in it that God was there. We see the exile as he gazes with strained eyes and breaking heart, and then turns wearily away, and day after day, week after week, plods eastward across

the desert. Every heavy step takes him farther from the shining sanctuary. And at last the sum of all his heavy steps brings him to Babylon. He enters into the heathen city and his whole heart sinks, for there is no sanctuary of Jehovah here. There are fantastic temples which bewilder him. He hears strange hymns upon the foreign air. He sees faces kindling with ideas which he cannot understand. Gods with mysterious names bewilder him, but no one knows his God. His soul sinks within him. Has he then been carried into a region where Jehovah's power does not reach ? Has he left his God behind him as he has lost sight of the great sanctuary on the sacred hill. And then comes to him Ezekiel's promise: "Thus saith the Lord, I will be to them a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." Before he has comprehended its exact meaning, he has caught its spirit. It brings him comfort. It makes the air less foreign. He is not totally in exile. And so he gathers courage in his heart.

As we stand off and look at the exile and his acceptance of God's promise, two facts are very distinct, and they must go together. One of them is the centralness and undisturbed supremacy of Jerusalem. It still remains the great sanctuary. This which is given in Babylon, whatever it may be, is the "little sanctuary." The sacredness which the Jew had always felt in the city of his fathers is not abolished. It is not declared that places are indifferent, and that this Babylon is just as truly the seat of the life of God as is the town of David. Sacred-

ness is not spread in simple indiscriminateness over the earth. And yet—this is the second fact—it is declared that God's presence cannot be confined in one small place. The sacredness is too mysterious, too subtle, too personal, to be shut up. It must go forth wherever those who needed it and could receive it went. However it might hold fast to its fountain, it must flow abroad, the same water of refreshment, and make itself reservoirs wherever there were thirsty lips.

These were the two truths—the unchanged separateness and centralness of the sacred city, and also the power of extension and expansion by which, wherever there was a child of Israel, there was a true presence of the God of Israel, wherever there was a devout Jew there was a little sanctuary of Jehovah.

Something which lets us understand this is familiar to our modern thought. Wherever there is an American, there is America, we say. In foreign lands, in despotisms, and in deserts, stands the citizen of our free land with its protection over him, and, more than that, with its genius in him, and he is still American. Still back across the ocean is the country which he loves ; still he remembers how its shores sank down into the west as he sailed out into the sea. He knows it is still there—the great America without which these little Americas in which the exile and the travellers live could have no reality. But they are real, and he who lives in them lives in the double fact that his country is definitely set here in the world's map, and also that her power

and her spirit reach wherever her children go. So where the civilized man goes, there is civilization; where the artistic man goes, there is art; where the free man goes, there is freedom burning in the depths of his free soul. Still each of these great interests has its own central home and shrine. Still there are parts of the earth where if one of these interests should perish, the flame would sink and tremble if it did not quite go out through all the world. But of them all the two facts are both true. They have their fixed homes and their power of expansion. They are supremely here, and yet they cannot be exclusively and solely here; wherever humanity in its wanderings builds them a channel, they will go, still feeding themselves to their remotest reaches from the fountain and the source at home.

Does not this let us feel how it was with the Jews at Babylon? One of them there remembered in his desolation the promise which had fallen on his ears as he was passing out of his beloved Jerusalem. As he remembered he looked up, and lo! a little sanctuary built itself about him; subtle, impalpable, invisible, so that no Babylonian's eye could see it, so that the scornful heathen who jostled the poor stranger on the street did not feel its walls. The despot who insulted his wretched slave never dreamed of the peace in which his slave's soul was enshrined and perfectly protected from his insolence. But it was there, this little sanctuary, built after the pattern of the great one in Jerusalem, and full of the same conscious, realized presence of God. When

he had once found that, the bitterest bitterness of exile was gone for him.

And now let us turn from him to our own lives, and ask ourselves what there is in them which corresponds to that which Jehovah promised to his people by the mouth of Ezekiel. What I have said will indicate, I hope, my meaning when I speak of the little sanctuaries of life. There are in life, just as there were in the great East, certain regions which are definitely and absolutely sacred. In them religion and the certainty of God's presence are at home. There all highest thoughts and motives naturally abound. And then, outside those regions, there are outlying tracts of life, what we are apt to call secular, which seem to be destitute at least of the consciousness of spiritual interests. Into them our circumstances, like Babylonian conquerors, drive us. And the discovery which changes everything is that in them, in what seem to be the heathen, hopeless countries, the soul may have its company with God, its spiritual homes and foods. Those are its little sanctuaries. Still the peculiarly distinctively religious region stands apart. The hour of prayer, the place of worship, the study of the Bible, the quiet meditation,—they make together the great sanctuary; but the home, the shop, the work, the study, the social circle,—these are the little sanctuaries, in each of which the spiritual life is real and rich. It is of them and of the spiritual life in them that I ask you to think this morning.

We must remind ourselves what it is that the word "sanctuary" means. It is a place made

sacred by the realized presence of God. Everything else is accidental; that is essential. The architecture and decoration, the mysterious lights and shadows of the holy of holies in the Jewish temple, were not what made its awfulness. It was that Jehovah was there. There He shone in the Shekinah. There He told His will. There He forgave sins. There He bestowed His blessing. There He gave His commandments. We need not go into the question of how all this was related to His universal presence. We need not even stop to remind ourselves that God could not be more actually present in the Holy place than He was on any breezy height of Galilee or in the crowded streets of Babylon. It is of His manifested and felt presence that we are speaking. The Jew knew Him there as he knew Him nowhere else; and it was that supremely manifested presence of Jehovah there which made that place, as no other place on the earth could be, a sanctuary.

Is there not, in the life of every man whose life fulfils itself, something which perfectly corresponds to this central sanctuary of Jerusalem. There are hours when God is no more truly present with us than at other times, but when we claim and feel His presence we shut the door and pray; on bended knees we tell our soul's wants directly into the ear of the all-hearing love. Up from our soul's depths come welling into our consciousness the profoundest needs. Promises issuing from the Holy Book, or no less certainly communicated to us from our knowledge of the necessities of the divine nature,

come down to meet the need and fold themselves about it. Visions of what we are in God's idea of us, and of what we might be in the entire fulfilment of that idea,—certainties, absolute certainties, of God's unaltered and unalterable love, deep communion with Him,—all these lie at the centre of the spiritual life. Nothing can do away with the necessity and blessedness of these. Nothing which God can do for the soul in its less conscious hours can supersede the necessity of these times, supremely, absolutely lived with Him.

We fear sometimes that these days of the great sanctuary have grown less common with many souls than they once used to be. Let us remember that we cannot live without them. Do you ever shut the door and meditate ? Are you ever humbly and filially alone with God ? Do you ever pray ? If not, you do not know what the richest richness of existence is. Oh, before it is too late, before the power is lost, before the hinges of the sacred door are rusted so that it will not open, appeal to your own soul, demand of your own soul that it shall know its privilege and insist that it shall claim its right and power of separating itself from everything beside and keeping company with God.

But when one has done that—when a soul has these hours of rich communion—then the question comes, What shall be done with all the rest of life ? How is it with the hours when the church and closet must be left behind, and, in the Babylon of the world, the man must be living the common life of men ? Then comes the doctrine of the little sanctu-

aries built by the expansive influence of the divine and more sacred times.

Here is the home life. How many fathers and mothers, heads of households full of children, full of cares, see in their houshold life only a Babylon. The self, with its deep needs, is swallowed up in the confusion of the busy days. The countless plannings and devisings make any one great plan of life impossible; which is very much like saying that the effort to go from Albany to Buffalo makes us lose the road from Boston to Chicago. The parent's religious life is wasted in the perpetual desire to make the children good; which is very much like saying that the tree is killed in order that the leaves may grow.

What shall we say of this? Must we not say that the trouble lies in the conception which pervades many homes, that the home-governors, the home-rulers are to be Christians and live spiritual lives, not in virtue of but in spite of their home occupations and household cares? If they can get rid of that idea—if they can expect to see God coming to them not over nor around but through the home relationships which He himself has built—then Babylon is transfigured, and in the very tumultuous heart of the overcrowding worry the little sanctuary springs to life.

The household truths are justice and love—not separate and standing off and fighting one another, but blending into one rich composite quality which has such a chance to make beautiful manifestation of itself nowhere else on earth. Everything

which goes on within the four walls must spring from and must educate that noble quality of just affection and of loving justice. What then? To father or mother, brother or sister, who lives in the spirit of that quality, must there not come times when it lifts itself from its lower to its higher exhibition, when the just love and loving justice of God become real to the soul by very reason of this machinery of the household which seem to shut them out. The divine home, the domestic peace of God, the strong, warm holding of the life in the great hands, are brought near and rescued from their awful distance by that which is going on in this lower household every day. The father, looking up and saying, "My Father," finds a little sanctuary in the prayer.

There seems to be an even bitterer exile when the soul leaves the closet and the shrine, not for the home but for the shop. How many Christian merchants there are who are always expecting and counting on the time when they can shut the office door at night, and go home and be Christians again after the day's necessary worldliness. How many of their lives are always anticipating the years when work will be over, and they can sit down and care for their souls in quiet. Those years perhaps will come, perhaps will not. The exile may or may not return to Jerusalem, and live wholly there; but surely there is something wrong if the active years have not their own nearness to God which they and they alone can give. The active years, the years of work, the years of used and ever-ripening powers!

Do you remember what Jesus said, "My Father worketh and I work." Rich were the moments when He lay upon the mountain top, and the great peace of God gathered around Him in the darkness, but there was another sense of His Father's presence which came to Him elsewhere than there. In work, in obedience, and coöperation came the rich company of each with each.

You sit and hold communion with your friend. You match your thoughts; you share each other's confidence; and then the clock strikes and working-time has come, and you rise up together and go out. The same tasks greet you both. You build the wall, you plough the field, you drive the engine, or you bargain in the trade together. Is there not another union between you which no depth of meditative communion could have made? Two men do not know each other till they have worked together. To have faced the same difficulties, to have rejoiced in the same success—that makes each present to the other in a new and living way.

If then the work of shop and office can be indeed, and can be felt to be, working with God, certainly in that coöperation there may be a little sanctuary. Does God want those things done which you are doing every day? Does He want the railroad built, the process of civilization maintained, the family supported, the laborer supplied with work? Does God want those qualities which the best doing of business involves,—integrity, energy, mercy, intelligence, maintained upon the earth? Are the operations of your trade as legitimate outputtings of true forces

as are the movements of the planets or the blowing of the winds? If they are, then he who does these things may dare to think of himself as God's co-worker, and down the medium of their common work the presence of the great worker may flow and surround his fellow-laborer.

It is not work, but work done ignobly, done undivinely, that separates the man who works from God. Do not desert your work, but pierce into its heart, exalt it to its loftiest conception if you would be more holy. Strike God's iron on the anvil, see God's goods across the counter, put God's wealth in circulation on the street, teach God's children in the school,—so shall the dust of your labor build itself into a little sanctuary where you and God shall dwell together.

If there is any labor which we should be apt to say would make the life of the laborer undivine and separate his soul from God, perhaps it would be politics. But, on the other hand, if there is any work which ought to make the worker feel God's company and get the inspiration of that feeling, it is politics. Politics as a selfish rivalry of personal interests, as a race of partisanship, is as far from God as darkness is from light. It wraps the politician round with a dense robe of selfishness, through which no sacredness can penetrate. But politics as an application of great principles, as the securing of the operation of eternal laws, is God's work, and he who works in it must work with God. If the undevout astronomer is mad, the politician who disowns the divine forces with which he deals is a blind

fool. And in this country we are all politicians. To know the best that we can learn of what is good for these sixty millions of the children of God, and to do what we can by our ballot and influence to secure it,—this is to work with God; and he who does it faithfully finds his political thought and labor a little sanctuary wherein God speaks to him, and gives him richly of His spirit.

Suppose a man wants to be a minister, and to give himself directly and entirely to sacred things; and suppose that circumstances or some inexorable demand of troublous times compels him to give up that privileged career, and to devote himself to politics. I can almost see the longing with which he looks back. He is not then to live with God. There is to be no divine communion for his soul. Alas for him if at least sometimes in the midst of his perplexities and struggles there does not come a better and a nobler thought about it all, so that he says, not as the rhetoric of a campaign speech to a crowd, but as a message from on high to his own soul, that since what he is working for is what God wants, therefore he is with God and God is with him in his working, and so he may take courage and expect to be kept pure in the midst of corrupt machineries and pest, in the dust of numberless details. If that consciousness never comes to him, surely he ought to be much afraid that what he is doing is not the work of God.

Among the Babylons into which men's lives are led it is not possible for us to forget that which is ordinarily called society,—the world of fashion and

of conventionally established and arranged intercourse of people with each other. It is a hard and barren world. It is not rich in character nor in ability. It crushes individuality and makes enthusiasm seem ridiculous. Each winter in our great cities makes its silly despotism seem more terrible. Into the borders of that world there comes some fresh young nature, full of belief in good and God, eager with youthful piety, keen in the wish to grow to its own best and to help other natures to their full development. What an old story it is of how there comes first the disappointment, and then the demoralization. First the pure standards are shocked, and then they yield. First they say "This is dreadful," and then they say, "Who can see anything dreadful about this?" Where is the salvation? Where it always is. In brave insistence that the very power which is trying to crush our life shall lift it and inspire and fulfil it. When the young man or woman in society keeps clear and strong the sense of individual existence and the craving for the opportunity to help the lives whose deeper possibilities are visible through all their tinsel, there is salvation. And that sense and craving can be kept by, and help to keep, the certainty of God's presence.

There are in every thickest crowd of frivolity and selfishness some pure souls who walk with God. Nearer than those who touch them nearest, is He. Others may come and go, but He is constant. Through the close envelope of His invisible companionship no blow or poison can assail them. For

them there is no need to run away from society. They are away from it in its very midst. Their personal life is intensified by their companionships, and the desire to be helpful feeds itself out of the very selfishness by which it is surrounded. Thus in the heart of society a soul may enshrine itself in God.

The same is true of study and scholarship. Will you lose God among your books, O scholar! In the fascination of the search for truths will you let go out of your soul the certainty that there is at the heart of everything one truth, one beating, throbbing, living soul whose name is not truth alone, but love ? I feel two tendencies in the world of thought and study. One of them is to cast God out altogether, as incapable of being known, if not incapable of existing; the other is to keep God apart as if He could not live with learning, and to pay in some obscure corner of the brain a worship which can have no warrant and no meaning for the intellect, to make, as it were, hurried little journeys back to Jerusalem in order to find for a few minutes the God who has been left there, and for whom Babylon can find no place.

Neither of those two things will do. It is in scholarship and learning that the God of truth is to be found. It is as the sum and heart of all knowledge that He is to be known. O you young scholars who come crowding back in these autumn days to school and college, are you leaving the sanctuary behind you in the homes where you are loved, and in the fields where you have breathed the air of God ? Is

there no special meeting of your soul with His which is possible for you among your books, which is possible nowhere in the world beside? Believe that there is, and how good is this great autumn trooping of students through the open doors! Believe that there is not, and it is a sad, a tragical procession. Let the heavens be darkened and the sun withdraw its shining as they come. But there is. In the heart of all true study God makes Himself a little sanctuary, and enshrines the true scholar in Himself.

But it is not necessary to multiply situations, conditions of exile in which God comes to man and builds His presence round them like a sanctuary. Everything which seems at first to separate a man from God, but by and by shows that it has a power to bring God and man together in some rich way of its own, illustrates what I have tried to preach. What multitudes of sick rooms there are where God has built His little sanctuary round the sufferer, and surprised him with a new kind of peace of which he never dreamed in health! What mountains of temptation where the struggling soul which thought itself alone has found itself alone with God! What doubters who in their wilderness of doubt have felt gathering around them the walls of a peculiar and most steadfast faith! "Oh, if I had time to rest and pray," you say; "Oh, if this pain would stop a moment and let me think and worship," "Oh, if this pressure of other people's needs would relax and let me care one hour for myself!" Those are the cries of the exile for his lost Jerusalem. And to

each, if the man has ears to hear, there comes the answer, "Thus saith the Lord God, I will be to them a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." Then the business and the pain and the service of others' needs grows more than tolerable, grows beautiful and gracious to the soul.

In the great cathedral of the world there is the high altar of perpetual, visible religion, where the worship is forever going on. There all men meet and own themselves, in conscious and deliberate devotion, the sons of God. And then there are the chapels, each with its special altar, where they who have their own peculiar work to do find that of God which in that work can give itself to man. But one great roof covers them all. He who goes from the high altar to the chapel does not go outside the church. The worship is all one, whatever be the strain in which the music sounds.

Here is the unity of life—the diffused presence of God, which no man in any exile can outgo—which makes of the whole world the universal Church.

Be sure, my friends, that both at the high altar of the distinct Christian experience and also in the chapel of your own peculiar life you find God. So only do you fulfil the particular with the universal, and make the universal strong and clear with the particular as well.

To go down from the high altar to the chapel is not to go away from God. To pass out of the great inspiring thoughts into the personal duties is not to cease to be religious. It need not be, at least. It may be the clothing of religion with reality, the

grip and grasp on truth and God and light. There, in the little sanctuary, He who in the great sanctuary our careless souls have missed may make us see Him, and believe Him and love Him and take Him for our own.

So may it be with you. You need God for the very things which seem to separate you from Him. You must seek Him in the very places where the misery of life seems to be that He is not. You must question the stoniest paths for springs of water. You must stand in the midst of doubts and look for faith.

What does the miracle of Jesus mean but this? "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" and lo! the Saviour is a Nazarene. "Can any man provide food here in the wilderness?" "And they took of the loaves and likewise of the fishes as much as they would." "He saved others, Himself He could not save," and "behold forth from the Cross shone the glory of the Son of God."

Some day the exiles shall go back to Jerusalem. They shall enter into the city where everything is visibly and manifestly holy. They shall be in the unhindered sight of Him that sitteth on the throne and of the Lamb forever. While they abide in Babylon may He give them grace to see that He is with them there, and to rejoice in the "little sanctuaries" which He makes, which He is, for them in their land of exile!

XII.

STORM AND CALM.

"And there was a great calm."—MATT. viii. 26.

HOW strongly and satisfyingly these words come in at the close of the story of the storm upon the Sea of Tiberias. Jesus and His disciples are sailing across the lake together. "And behold there arose a great tempest in the sea insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but He was asleep. And His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us, we perish! And He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith. Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea. And there was a great calm." There is the noise and hurry and fight. The wild winds and clouds overhead, the wild waters beneath, the panic-stricken hearts within the boat. One moment all is tumult and distress. The next moment Jesus has risen from the pillow where He is sleeping and looked around, and said a word, and made a gesture, and all is changed. "There is a great calm." The beauty of the story is in the way in which the change all comes from and belongs to Jesus. When He rises the storm stops. The calm that comes is from the power of His presence. As if a

strong, quiet man stepped in majestically among a crowd of noisy brawlers, and his very appearance made them ashamed and hushed their noise. So Jesus steps in among the elements, and they are still in a moment. It is a picture of the peace that He bestows. However feebly we understand it, the story at least is luminous to every loving eye with this—the majesty and beauty of Christ and the way in which peace flows out abundantly wherever He is truly present. A thousand thousand saints have felt that. These stories of the Bible, these stories of Jesus, are so full of His spirit that they scatter it everywhere, and the calm that fell upon the waters of Gennesaret has been renewed in the peacefulness and rest that have fallen upon multitudes of hearts that have read or listened to the narrative.

And how the same words tell the story of some point or crisis in a life. A period of tumult comes and passes. The storm of feeling is excited, and when it has fought itself out in its fury, it goes down and there is peace. A struggle for life, for bread, is pressing for a while and then the life sails out into smoother water; peace comes where there used to be suspense. There is a great calm. It is what the most eager and excited experiences are always looking forward to,—not to be forever distressed and harassed, but some day to feel things growing smooth and easy, to find a calmness and repose. Some men do find it far more easily than others—indeed, some lives are placid by their very make and nature—but I think that it comes to us

all, at least in vague misgivings, that there must be a calmness and repose consistent with the fullest life and the most faithful duty and the most earnest thought, of which almost all men almost entirely miss. As we are whirled about in our maelstrom we are aware, or at least we picture to ourselves, that there is quiet water close beside us. Our ship grazes its placid surface, and then is swept back into the tumult and the storm. Is it a reality which we see, or only a picture which our fancy draws ? I should like to try to speak this morning of the calmness that God really gives to people's lives. It seems to me to be something that we are all so vaguely desiring and seeking that it cannot but be well worth while to try to understand a little of what it is and how it comes.

In the first place, then, the quality of which we speak is not a matter of original temperament. We know how different men are. We know how serenely some men bear, by the very constitution of their nature, experiences that overwhelm the sensitive brethren beside them. It is an open question which life is best. No man can say whether the passionless serenity of the calm man's life loses more in the lack of strong enjoyment than it escapes in the absence of keen suffering. But, at any rate, that is not the difference that we refer to. Nor is it the mere placidity of outward circumstances,—the even flow of life that slips without a ripple on from experience to experience, from year to year. That is so often merely external, so apt to be deceptive. There is the chafing and restlessness that goes on in

the quietest lives, and now and then we are taken by surprise when we are able to look down through some break in the most restless and excited career and see in what perfect repose of soul the man is living underneath it all. Men try sometimes to calm the tumult of the inner life for themselves, or for one another, by merely making the outward circumstances calm and peaceful, but it does no good. It is only dressing the maniac in a quaker's clothes. They may hush and awe him for a moment with their serene composure, but after the moment's hush is over he will be as wild as ever, and tear his uncongenial dress to tatters.

Neither the calmness of temperament nor the calmness of circumstances, then, is what we mean. Both of these, of course, are gifts of God. No hand but our Father's tunes and disposes the subtle adaptations of His children's characters, or arranges with the fitnesses of harmony or contrast the scenery in the midst of which they are to pass their lives. It is God who lays His hand upon a new life just going out from His creative presence and gives it a peacefulness and calm which it brings back to Him when it returns for judgment. But it is striking to see how much more easily we think of what comes to us by education and experience than of that which comes to us in our original constitution as the gift of God. It seems to be in some higher sense appreciable as a gift when it enters in through our consciousness by His discipline than when He sows it among the seeds of our unconscious being before we are born. And so it is the calmness that comes

from our own thoughtful, fruitful experience of life that we want most to consider and be thankful for.

I am assuming all along that calmness is a blessing. Are we ready to assume that absolutely ? It is strange what two ideas are current, and how imperfectly we reconcile them with one another. One idea is that tumult and excitement is bad, the other is that nothing can be worse for a man than absolute calmness and serenity. We hold to both ideas by turns. We cannot settle down to either. As soon as our life begins to attain its longed-for peace we begin to fear it and to reach back after the disturbance which we tried so hard to escape from. All this seems strange, but it is not to be disregarded. It is not unaccountable. It shows us clearly enough that mere calmness, indiscriminately, will not do. It must be of the right sort. It must come from the right source. It must be lively and not deadly. It must keep and not lose the best blessings that belong to tumultuous life. It must be the calmness of perfect action and not of mere stagnation.

Indeed it is evident enough what a difference there is in different men's composure. Two men are waiting for their execution. Compare the stolidity of one with the quiet, patient faith of the other. Paul and Silas are in prison at Philippi, " And at midnight they prayed and sang praises unto God." How different from the dreary silence of despair with which perhaps some poor wretch in the next cell waited for his doom. Yet both were calm. See two men as they lie upon their death-beds. One like a brute, one like a saint, they both are calmly

waiting for the end. Such scenes as these show us plainly enough that there is a higher peace and a lower, a good calmness and a bad. Do they not throw abundant light upon those words of Jesus, "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth give I unto you."

And now let us come and consider what the calmness is which, brought out by the discipline of life, may be really accepted as God's gift. The truth seems to me to be this: that the calmness to which God is always leading us consists in a perfect poise of tasks and powers. And this idea is valuable because as we follow it out it explains both the attainment of calmness and the loss of calmness which occur in every growing life, and shows how they are consistent with one another. Let us look into this. Take the lowest life, the life of the vegetable. We easily attribute to it a perfectly calm existence. Its tasks and its powers are in perfect poise. Its work is to grow, and the power of growth is present in the plant. But just as soon as life advances another stage, as soon as you come up to the brutes, little as we know of their existence, we have a misgiving that the repose is lost. The poise is not so perfect. Here are desires that the powers cannot gratify. We have entered into a world of passion and unrest. Then come to man, and you have all the higher range of tasks, each calling for its power, each making clamor and disturbance till its power comes to match it. Now see what the course is. Here is a life at low rest (as we may say). It acknowledges few responsibilities and finds in itself the powers to

fulfil them all. Now let a new duty press itself upon that life, a new emotion, a new experience of any kind, before untried. The first result is a disturbance. The demands and the powers are thrown out of poise. But by and by the power comes up to meet the new task. The two are harmonized upon a higher level. There is a loftier calm attained. But still it is not the highest—another need appears. Once more the balance is disturbed; and only when the nature equals this new demand is it restored. So it goes on. So it goes up. Each higher calm provokes a new disturbance, and only so a calm a little higher is reached. Each in its turn is the healthy condition of the growing soul. Before us all, as the consummation, far off is seen the perfect rest in God when task and power shall be eternally equal to one another but for the imperfect being seeking perfection, it is in this constantly alternating attainment and dislodgment, this calm and tumult following each other that the happy and healthy life consists.

This is the general truth I want to teach. But I can show its meaning best if we take various special problems and difficulties of life and show how in them men come to a calmness that is given them by God.

1. Here, for instance, is this endless problem of the condition of the world we live in. Any man who has eyes cannot help gazing at it sometimes; and can any man look at it calmly, mixed as it is of sin and sorrow, pain, deceit, hindrance, hate, all confused with the divine things that are in it all the while? Well, see how it illustrates our principle. Some base, low-minded man, some mere

indifferent spectator, some purblind mole of selfishness, looks at it and declares, "Oh, it is all right"; "There is no trouble." He sees no problem. His coarse gaze finds no mystery. There is no puzzle, and so no struggle; and so on he drifts in the complacent serenity of his self-satisfaction. Close by his side is a nature which the blind problem of the world perplexes through and through. Here is a man whom the apparent injustice of the universe stirs to the very core. He cannot keep calm. He lives in a continual indignation. His life is full of outbursts of discontent. He sees things wrong, not right! What shall we say? Has not that man advanced? Is not this disturbance a higher condition than the old stagnant calm? Let us not blame the last or praise the other. Let us thank God when He lets us break loose from the first calm in which the lower natures live, and break out into utter hatred or contempt of meanness, utter impatience at the deep-felt moral contradictions of the universe, even although it may convulse us to the bottom and break our calmness all to pieces. Let us be afraid if we find ourselves growing incapable of such noble excitement and disturbance! But, once again, what then? This is not final. The disturbance has come from the intrusion of a higher demand. The calm has been broken! How shall it be restored? Only when the powerful sense of God's government is brought to meet this spectacle of prevalent disorder, only when behind all the unrest and distraction that we see our souls are certain that there is a power of order and beneficence at

work, capable perfectly of controlling the disorder and bringing peace out of discord,—only then do we rise to the second and higher level of calm, where task and power once more are in poise. We begin with the serenity of clearly-seen conditions; we pass into the perplexities of apparent confusion; and we come at last to the higher confidence of faith.

This illustrates the law I tried to state. There are three conceivable conditions of our thought and feeling with reference to this apparent confusion in whose midst we live,—placid acquiescence, which is bad, and vehement questioning and remonstrance, which is better, and serene trust in a living God, which is the perfect condition of a human soul. Do we keep this always clear? Are we not constantly mistaking the first condition for the third—placid acquiescence which is too spiritless to ask any question for the serene trust which has found the answer for all its questionings in God? Do we not often think that when a man passes on from the first condition into the second, from placid acquiescence into vehement remonstrance, he is going backward and not forward? And yet this is the progress by which God leads our souls. There will be sad and fearful moments in it, in which it will seem as if all were lost; but they will be only the tumultuous moments of spiritual youth which come between the unthinking placidity of childhood and the thoughtful serenity of manhood. They are healthy and natural. They are the storms of spring that bring the summer, the revolutions out of which comes by and by the peace.

2. Then take another illustration. In the region of personal character the true relation of calmness to disturbance is equally manifest. There is a certain typical growth that hundreds of men go through that brings them from a lower out into a higher life. The lowest life where they begin is calm enough. Task and powers are in perfect poise. Men do not feel the pressure of any higher needs than food and drink and ordinary cheap society. They are quite capable of supplying themselves with these, and so they go placidly along. There are no high ambitions, and so no discontents. How calm those days go by! There is no murmur in the sky. The earth is solid underfoot. The man is equal to all the tasks he apprehends, goes regularly to his business every morning, enjoys the dinner that he honestly provides, is happy in his social joys, and faithful to his social duties. Task and power just balance each other in the still summery atmosphere of his contented life. But by and by a better thing has come. The spiritual nature is aroused. Something in that man that was made for a divine association is crying out for the divinity that it was made for. The soul wants God. Is it a lower or a higher state on which the man has entered when that which once satisfied can satisfy no longer, when the man seems to be standing awestruck and fearful before his own awakened soul, which is demanding of him its proper food? He offers it the best he has, but it will not be appeased. He spreads before it all his social refinements, all his prudential moralities, but the soul turns off from them all. It wants God, and

the man has no God to give it. That soul of his presses him with vehement desires that he cannot gratify. He cannot satisfy himself. Has the man gone up or down in leaving his calmness and coming into this disturbed, tumultuous region of spiritual desire? This is the region that all the stories of conversion are always trying to paint. They make much of this phase of life, and they are true to at least one constantly recurring experience. The man goes about restlessly. He asks his friends, he reads his Bible, he haunts the church, to see if anywhere there can be found the power that can match this new demand and so the lost poise of his life be restored. Is it a higher state? We know it is! The man has left his old content behind as the pine tree leaves the clod when it shoots through the ground, and, with its tense vines tingling and aching with life, goes up to seek the sky. It is better, this spiritual need and ache and struggle—better, but not the best. By and by, as all stories of conversion love to tell, suddenly or gradually (they love to make it sudden in order that its divineness may be the more picturesquely evident), there comes into the man the power of God to satisfy this soul's inexorable craving. He offers Himself to the soul that He has made. He will forgive it; He will supply it; He will teach it; He will give it Himself to love. Words of the richest meaning, figures teeming with the sweetest suggestiveness of peace, have been sought everywhere and heaped together to utter the new calmness of this higher life on which the soul enters when the soul has thus found its

satisfaction. Tumult is past. Danger is all forgotten. Responsibility is no longer heavy. All is serenity in that high region where the human life abides with God, identifies its life with His and shares in His peace.

Again, see how in the growth of character this law of ours has found another illustration. Out of calmness that it may enter into a sublime calm. Losing his life that he may find it more abundantly, that is the progress through which the man passes who is worthy of it. Again we have the three conditions—the indifference, the struggle, and the reconciliation—the worldling, the seeker, and the saint. The unrest of the second is better than the calmness of the first, and both are only preparatory for the complete rest which remaineth only for the people of God.

3. I venture upon one more illustration because it is one in which I feel a very deep interest, but I will give it to you very briefly. I think that the history of very many of us, with reference to religious belief, is described under the law of progress which we are dealing with this morning. How many of us began with an easy implicit faith in the religious truths which we were taught? We conceived them narrowly and grasped and held them with no difficulty. We were quite at rest. We knew what was true; we were able to believe all that demanded our belief; we were perfectly placid in our traditional religion. But by and by with many of us came a time of painful, terrible dislodgment. The truths which we had held so easily rose, grew, became too great, too

awfully important for us to hold with hands like those. Then doubt came. Could we say that we believed what seemed slipping away from us so? It may have been that the truths seemed incredible; it may have been that we seemed to ourselves merely too poor and small to have anything whatever to do with truths like those; at any rate doubt came. To those of us who can look back on such a time as something past, how does it seem now? Was it not better that such thoughts came to us? Was it not God who sent them, or, at any rate, was it not God who made us such that they must spring up in our minds when we came to think as He had made us to? And then, if afterwards we have been led on, as we believe, until in deeper personal sympathy with God through Jesus we are able to lay intenser hold upon the real spiritual essence of our faith than we ever could lay on its formal statement, shall we not thank God that He led us up to the better land even through tangled and dark woods that covered pathlessly the mountain side? Again, we have the three conditions—traditional acceptance, hesitation, spiritual faith. The dogmatist, the doubter, the believer. It is a going forward and not a going back when God leads us from the first into the second. Our care should be that, having come thus far, we may go on and not return. It is easy to slip back from doubt to dogmatism, and think that we are marching forward into faith. Let us beware of that, for the broad mountain top with its sunlight and free air is possible to all of us if we choose to struggle on and reach it.

Like the disciples pulling calmly on and thinking they could cross the lake, the Christ in their boat lying asleep, is the mere dogmatism that rests in its own sufficient grasp of the truths of our religion. Like the disciples all helpless with fright in the storm, and expecting to perish before they reached the shore, is the doubt which finds how helpless its own self-confident belief has been. Like the disciples, with their Lord awake again, sailing over the smooth waters into port is the faith that has come from personal apprehension of Christ. No religious calm is safe in which the personal Christ sleeps and we think that we can do without Him. It is a blessed storm, however hard it blows, that makes us wake Him. It is a blessed doubt that does for us, what doubt has done for so many, driven them from holding truths to hold the truth, from believing Christianity to believing Christ.

I hope that these illustrations have given us some idea of what the place and value of calmness really is, of when and where it is desirable, of how there are many portions of our lives in which it needs to be broken up in order that we may go on to a calmness that is higher.

I think some things must have become apparent which it is well for us to notice. These are:

That calmness being a true proportion between tasks and powers, it is a thing of absolute fact and not of mere emotion. It is not the way we feel about things but the way things are. And yet we are always making calmness a mere word of feeling.

There may be no peace in our lives and we go about still crying, peace, peace. There may sometimes, on the other hand, be the profoundest peace below and yet strange unrest on the surface. Who of us does not know men whose tasks and powers are indeed truly mated, and are doing their work smoothly and well, who are yet always dissatisfied; and others, only too many of them, who seem calm as a summer's morning while all their life is at loose ends and fluttering with confusion?

And, then, from this it seems to follow that since calmness is not a thing of mere surface emotion, but must go down to the deepest condition of our lives, it can come not from any mere smoothing of the ruffled surface which we ourselves could do, but only from that harmonizing of the disturbed spiritual elements on which God must work. We cannot say, just, "Go to now, I will be calm." We must cry with Paul, "Now the Lord of peace give us peace by all means."

And still from this it seems to follow that no perfection of highest inner and outer calmness, no heaven here or hereafter is impossible for any poor vexed soul, or for the poor vexed world, since into the hands of Omnipotence has fallen back that task which man has struggled at in vain; and the calmness, the heaven which we cannot make for ourselves, we may take out of the free gift of His love.

When in the midst of all the restlessness of earthly life we talk of calmness our thoughts go forth to God. We think of Him as infinitely, eter-

nally calm. No passion sweeps its cloud across His life. He is above, where indignation and impatience never reach. What do we think of as the meaning—what is the root and reason of His calmness? Is it not this—the perfect poise of task and power? It is infinity meeting infinity; the infinite duty and the infinite ability; no over-plus of task awaiting its power; no unused power that cannot find its task. In all that is included in the deep Scripture phrase which says that man was made in God's image, I can see nothing deeper or more beautiful than this—the intimation which I find there that for man also such a state is possible; in him, too, there may be this perfect poise of task and power, and so he may be as calm as God. There is a perfect state conceivable for our humanity, in which there shall be no disturbing element, and yet none of the danger of stagnation that results from being undisturbed. We may be free from indignation, and yet never fall into feeble tolerance. We may be above doubt and yet hold vigorously every truth. We may be free from passion and yet full of feeling,—without haste, without rest, and yet abounding in life and work. The picture of such a condition of humanity as the first idea of God, is kept in the sweet story of the garden where the man and woman lived in the peaceful sunshine of the earliest days; and it renews itself in the other garden where the redeemed are to walk in white garments by the river of the water of life, with the Lamb who has brought them back to Himself—calmness at the end as at the beginning of the book of life.

And how is it in this middle life that lies between the paradises? I think there can be no clearer indication of what a mingled life of calm and excitement this present human life of ours is meant to be than in the life which the Son of Man lived when He was representing to us all the very pattern of a human life. Look at the Incarnation. That there was underneath, in the deep soul of Jesus, a strong abiding calm we verily believe; that many of the things that trouble us passed by and left Him unmoved we may be sure; but who that reads the Bible does not feel thankful that that perfect human life of Jesus was not one unbroken, placid, emotionless monotony? Who does not rejoice that his divine Master could be manlikely indignant? Who does not glory in those burning words of hot impatience with which Jesus showed that He could not abide the meanness of canting Pharisees and sophist Sadducees? Who has not heard the whip of small cords sing through the close air of the superstitious temple and clear the atmosphere as thunder does? Who has not been led into new thoughts of manly life by hearing Jesus rebuke Chorazin and Bethsaida, as well as by hearing Him console and forgive the adulteress? We must not let these scenes go out of the life of Jesus. If we do we shall forget to be indignant with meanness and oppression. We must not let them go and set up a colorless Christ to copy, or our lives will grow pale and wretched. No, my dear friends, the world may come, is surely coming where we shall be capable of indignation that is not fiery and scorn that does not burn. But with the pattern

of the man of Nazareth to copy, that is not what we are to look for now. I complain of our present state, not that we are too restless and excited, but that we are restless and excited about the wrong things. I complain not that we are not calm enough, but that our calm and our excitement do not know their places. We fret if a trifle is wrong about our dinner, if a rival gets before us in the hunt for notoriety, if a companion does not pay us what we think the due respect; and we are calm as statues and smile on in perfect satisfaction while the laws of God are violated and the poor are wronged right by our side. We worry if we violated an etiquette yesterday, and let the sins of yesterday go unrepented. We are indignant with other men's vices and tolerant about our own. Our storms blow in the wrong places. Our calms come just where we need the healthy fury of a storm. We want to pray not, "Lord, take away the power of excitement," but "Lord, let our excitement like Christ's be always true and timely—let it glow against all meanness and all sin, especially our own. And let every passion prepare us for a higher calm!"

I think what I have said to-day is true and most important, and yet, now as I look back upon our text and all the story out of which it comes, I fear that I have not said what you expected, what you had a right to expect that I would say when I announced it. I can fancy, I am sure, that there must have been some, who, conscious of perplexed and bewildered lives, hungered to hear something of how

the soothing calm which they were longing for could come. They wanted rest. How should they get it? I have not seemed to speak especially to them, and yet in what I have said there is the answer to their question. You want peace and relief. Well, there is only one worthy principle by which to hope for it. Peace must come to you not by the lifting off of the burden, but by the pouring in of the strength that shall make you able to bear your burden. That is the only true and brave man's peace. Is it bereavement that is troubling you? The calm must come back to you not by the restored presence of your dead friend, but by the new presence of Christ, who brings with Him in His spiritual access the spiritual companionship of all of ours who have gone to Him. Is it your sin? Only Christ the forgiver can give you peace. Is it your friendlessness? Only the friend of the friendless can help you. Is it your felt ignorance? Only the wisdom of God can hush or comfort you. Everywhere the calmness that we look for, all the calmness that we have a right to, He will give us. And if we all knew how near He was to us and how ready, who need go on perplexed, excited? Look back at those disciples upon Galilee. The boat goes tossing and filling, but why do they not call Jesus? They think they can sail it safely home themselves without Him. If they keep on so too long their boat and they will go down into the foaming waters. But no! At last, see, they have found out their weakness. They are turning to Him, —"Lord, save, we perish." How readily He wakes! How mightily

He speaks! How graciously and perfectly into the souls that have come to Him for the power to match the tasks of life there comes the great calm, the peace that passeth understanding.

XIII.

THE BLESSING OF THE LORD.

"The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich and He addeth no sorrow with it."—PROVERBS x. 22.

THERE is always a peculiar feeling in our minds when we listen to Solomon talking about happiness. We are sure that he knows what he is telling us about when he declares where happiness is not to be found. A man of such exuberant and enterprising life as few men have, he had determined to be happy, and the result had been a most unhappy story. Much that was bright and pleasant he had found, but yet the sum of life for him was vanity. All the time he had been haunted by the knowledge that there was something better which he might have if he would. It is out of all this experience that he bursts forth with this proverb, "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich."

You can see where the pathos of the proverb lies as Solomon utters it. It is in those last words, "He addeth no sorrow with it." Plenty of riches Solomon had found, but always there had been a sorrow with it. The charm, the glory of the riches which the blessing of the Lord should give was that there was no sorrow in it. There is where lies the

deepest feeling of the verse, in those quiet words at the end which are like a deep pool in which a running stream gathers its stillest and profoundest waters. And it is with special reference to these words that I want to speak about the verse to-day.

For we all have enough of the great king's experience to understand him; we have all felt the trouble in life which he felt. It is not that the world has not its blessings which bring their riches to us, but that every kind of riches comes dogged with its own kind of sorrow. Still the riches is attractive enough to make us seek it, to spend our lives, to give away our lives in seeking it perhaps; but always the feet are hindered in running to it, the hands that we have stretched out to it hesitate and are almost drawn back just as they are on the point of grasping it, because we know that with the joy we certainly must take a sorrow. "No rose without its thorn" sings the old, threadbare proverb, and if we think of it there is something deeply pathetic in the fact that such a proverb as that should have grown threadbare in the hands of men. The experience which is embodied in that proverb looks out from history to greet each new generation of men as it grows up, like a solemn, sad face painted years ago out of the soul of some great master on the walls of the market-place of some Italian town, in sight of which all the people of that town have grown up from boys and girls to men and women for centuries. We can see the power of that experience everywhere. All human life in its perpetual pursuits is full of eagerness which yet is very seldom hearty and full-souled,

but trembles with a hesitation which, while it does not make men cease to seek the prizes of the world, weakens their heart and chills their enthusiasm in their struggles.

Think how this consciousness appears in several of the kinds of wealth which the world offers. First there is literal riches, the actual money which men seek so earnestly. It comes—sometimes it comes abundantly—but how rarely it comes without sorrow! How often the man has had to soil his conscience a little in order to secure it; or, if there is not that, how immediately the fear of losing it begins to beset the joy of having it,—how the simplicity of life grows complicated with many cares, how the fear lest men shall not recognize our wealth and do us honor haunts a vast number of the rich men's hearts, how the jealousy of other men's wealth comes in with the possession of our own, and how, to men of too high a nature for these lower sorrows to affect, the limitations of the wealth which they have won, its powerlessness to create moral character, to make men good, seems to make its possession a worthless and unsatisfying thing. These are the sorrows that the world gives when it gives wealth. There is no need of any vulgar abuse of money or any foolish denial of the privileges that it gives. Only this is as sure as is the happiness that it brings, that with the happiness comes sorrow.

And so it is with a far better thing than money, so it is with learning. There, too, are the two great hindrances, the two great sorrows that come with increasing knowledge and haunt the scholar's study,

—first, the sense of limitation, the vast outlying region of that which knowledge cannot do. Neither can knowledge any more than money make men good or noble. And, second, the pestilence of jealousy, the fear or the dislike of other men who have learned more than we have, or whose learning has carried them to different conclusions from those that we have reached. These are the two spectres that haunt all man's gaining of knowledge, the sense of incompleteness and the jealousy that comes of selfishness.

The same is true of social influence and fellowmen's esteem. It, too, brings its sorrows with it. You win the place that you have sought for in your brethren's regard, and immediately the knowledge of how slight your influence is and the fear that the fickle will of those you touch may turn them any day from your influence to some other which is wholly different, gathers round you and will not let you enjoy your coveted popularity in peace. And so of fame. It is all full of spots of defamation, and a hundred hands are eager to pull down the idol of the hour from his pedestal. So even of friendship, the choicest and purest of earth's treasures. The earth gives you your friend and thenceforth all your life is bright with a new brightness; but the earth gives you sorrow with your friend. The insufficiency of the best life to satisfy any other life, the pain with which you take your friend's weaknesses and faults, as it were, as an addition to your own, the suspicion and jealousy with which you watch the answering love, the constant dread of the great break

of death which is not wholly dreadful for any man until he dreads it not merely for the mysterious pain that it will bring himself, but for the woe that it will bring to some one who is dearer to him than himself,—all these are the sorrows that the earth gives a man always with one hand when with the other she holds out to him the most precious thing she has to give, a friend.

We dwell upon these various particulars and we see the mysterious mixture everywhere. But perhaps it is not by dwelling on particulars, but by standing with a sensitive and sympathetic nature in the midst of the great general tumult of human life, and letting it express itself upon us, that we get most vividly the impression of this truth of how sorrow comes like a shadow behind—or perhaps rather like a subtle and spiritual essence in—all the good things that the world has to give us. What is the great feeling of men about human life? Here is the great tireless struggle to keep alive, the deep and universal dread of dying, the determination that they will not die. Here are men revelling in life, finding the sun dear every morning, turning to recruit their living powers with new strength every night. Here are men standing beside the grave of their brother who has died, and pitying him. And then in the midst of all this some voice breaks out, more or less earnestly, in an article in a review, and asks, "Is life worth living?" and instantly you see that the question has touched some latent and unowned misgiving, has often stirred the deepest suspicions in just the lives that seemed the happiest and fullest. What

does it mean? Is it not simply this—the deep abiding conviction that life is good, and yet the perpetual conviction, growing out of long experience, that the good life will always bring sorrow in its hand? The bright and hopeful souls trust, in the face of a thousand disappointments, that the bliss will shed the sorrow and shine out clear and serene; the souls that are less sanguine go on thinking that, on the whole, life is well worth taking even with its inevitable pain; but all alike keep underneath a sense of joy in living, an expectation of disappointment and alloy which is always present and which is constantly finding itself an utterance.

We talk of all this, but I think that Solomon knew it all better than any of us. He had tried life on every side. He was no secluded saint who had lived above temptation—that unfound being at whom men of the world are always sneering, when, instead of that, if they could find him they ought to stand before him in reverence, with the shoes off their feet—Solomon was not that. He was a man who knew what the world could give and how its gifts came always backed and haunted by a sorrow. And then came the words of his proverb. He knew something else. He knew what God could give. He knew how God's gifts differed from the world's gifts. "The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich and He addeth no sorrow with it." Do we not see now how much these words contain? It is the purity, the freedom from mixture and alloy, the absoluteness and simplicity of God's blessings, that seems beautiful and precious to him. And oh, how

often that is what seems so precious and beautiful to us! Not to be very rich, but to hold what wealth I have so purely that it shall do nothing but good to me or to my brethren; not to sweep across the world with my influence, but so far as it does reach, in the little circle which it does cover, to have it an influence absolutely for blessing and not a curse to any man,—that is the kind of desire which I think grows strongest in the true man's heart. Not greatness, but purity; not a vast range, but a complete sincerity,—these are what we want. And when Solomon says that these come only by God's gift, I think there are two different regions in which we can consider the truth of what he says. First, there are the things which men take from the world, and find to be haunted by sorrow. These same things, taken from God's hand, are robbed of their sorrow and become sources of pure joy. Second, there are the things which the world cannot give at all, which God must give and which, therefore, must bring only happiness. Let us look at both.

It would be easy to run once more through the different kinds of riches which I specified, and see how each drops the element of pain which we saw in it the moment that it is taken as God's gift. Think of mere money. If I learn to hold it as God's steward, what has become of the trouble that it used to bring me when I thought that I had won it by my shrewdness and must hold it by my strength? I cannot be haunted by the fear of losing it! May not He take it away who gave it to me? I cannot be anxious to display it! It is really His, not mine,

and He will let it be seen as He thinks best. I cannot be jealous of my neighbor who has a little more than I have! It is only that God distributes His gifts among His children as seems best to Him. There is nothing left, no sorrow, no anxiety except only this deep anxiety that I may use the wealth that He has given me as He, the Giver, would have wished; and that anxiety His constant presence is always making a joy because it keeps me in perpetual sympathy and consultation with Him. When we think of the dignity of that conception of the rich man's life, how vulgar all the ordinary ways in which our rich men live appear. And so of learning. If it be God's message and not my discovery, there, too, the discontents and jealousies which haunted it are gone. The incompleteness of it only carries my thought and heart up to the dear hand in which the part that is withheld from me is kept. And the rivalry of my fellow-student is only as if two brothers stood at different points to hear what their father spoke to both of them, and yet were near enough to speak across to one another, and what each heard became the portion of the other, and out of the united hearing of the two their knowledge of his will was gathered. Still more of friendship, that which I called the most precious gift of man. What many and many a friendship needs to clarify it, to take out the suspiciousness, the jealousy, the fretful sense of limitation that is in it, is the simple and certain sense that behind the choice which each friend made of the other, God put the two together. That, you know, is the consummate

sacredness of marriage, the safeguard of its purity, the warrant of its permanence. And what your friendship with your friend needs to have put into it is the notion of divine gift. If it had that, the human friend would be supplied, as it were, by the abundance of the divine friend, the utterance of whose love he would have become.

I am anxious that you should see what I mean by this notion of taking everything as God's gift, which so robs life of sorrow. It is no foolish attempt to get rid of second causes. It is no fantastic effort to make believe that money is not to be won by industry and knowledge gained by study and friends by friendliness. But it is the everlasting feeling of the fountain behind the stream. It is the sense of the first cause behind the second cause. Your dinner is on your table. If you put it there, and only you, then as you taste its sweetness, the very taste suggests the wonder whether you will always be able to provide a dinner, and you are wondering how your neighbor feeds compared with you; or, if you are a nobler man, you find the pleasure of the senses always suggesting how much there is beyond the senses that is not fed. The plentiful food for the body wakens the hunger of the hungry soul. All that is changed, all those besetting troubles disappear the moment that God spreads your table for you, the moment that you know that it is God who spreads your table. Then it is like the manna in the desert which brought to the Israelites none of the sorrows which our self-earned dinner brings to us. Every morning as they found it on the sands

they took and ate it, not doubting that to-morrow morning they should find it there again, not grudging their brother Israelite his supply who stooped and gathered by their side, and always led on to the thought of spiritual need and spiritual mercy as they collected the body's food that seemed to be yet warm from the almighty hand. Or, if we dared to look yet higher for our illustration, the meal which lies upon your table as the gift of God, has something of the abundant and unmixed joy which must belong to the mystic feast of heaven of which the book of the Revelation tells, the marriage supper of the Lamb. "Blessed are they which are called to that marriage supper," says the book. They shall sit down in peace. No sign of doubt or fear or sorrow can be upon their faces or their hearts. They take the sacred food out of the very hand of God. For them the old proverb of the king is perfectly fulfilled, "The blessing of the Lord maketh them rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it." And an anticipation of that unmixed joy is in the way in which every soul that really believes in God takes the things of ordinary life from Him, and is thrilled with the touching of His hand in taking them.

The two elements of sorrow in the joys which are given to us in this world are imperfection and jealousy. It is because our own possession of them is incomplete, and because we grudge our brethren their possession of them,—it is for these reasons that they give us such imperfect pleasure. The incompleteness cannot be done away with, cannot be made complete, but, coming from God's hand, it may be-

come to us the interpretation of the way in which His completeness shall be given to us just as fully as we can receive it. The jealousy cannot be lifted off by any assurance that we and we alone shall have God's richest gifts, but it may be drowned and lost in a sincere delight that all our brethren may have them as well as we. Our own possession of them may only make clear to us the abundant possibility of other men. When those great changes come then the sting that lay at the heart of our dearest and most precious things is gone; and those great changes must come when any man, given to God himself, feels God giving Himself to him in everything.

But we want to press on and speak of the other class of blessings which come to us from God, those which come to us direct from Him, which the world cannot give to any man even as a second cause. These are the riches of the soul; they are the religious blessings which surpass all others until they seem to be the only valuable things to the man who really has them. What are they? There is one noble comprehensive description of them in the New Testament which tells their whole story. St. John calls Jesus the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. "Grace and truth." That is what God gives to any soul which He makes fully rich. And what is grace? It is at once a character and an action. It is the nature of God passing over by an act of God to become character in us. I think that in this word, grace, which is at once the name of a nature and the name of an action, we have a

very striking indication of how perfectly nature and action are at one, are at perfect harmony in God. When I say grace, I mean first the very substance of the being which God is. When I say grace, I mean, again, the forgiveness which God in His mercy gives man for his sins. When I say grace, finally, I mean that new life in man which begins in gratitude for God's pardon, and grows on and up into greater and greater likeness to the God it thanks. How rich and full the great word is! And so with truth, religious truth—that, too, if we follow it well out to its idea, is not mere knowledge imparted. It is God's own being shed by love into the being of His children. "I am the truth," said Jesus. Truth, religious truth, is light which is first a quality in the sun, then an action reaching all the way from the sun through space to earth, and then a quality in the earth making it lustrous and sunlike. And these two words, grace and truth, describe the riches which God gives to the soul on which He bestows Himself. Forgiveness and enlightenment! The soul of poor blind Lazarus, the soul of great and mighty David, the soul of the poor stumbling child, the soul of the great, Christian scholar, the soul of the patient sufferer at perfect peace in his dark room, the soul of the strong hero going forth with leaping heart to battle in the sunshine;—just as soon as you fold back the robe of accident and find the heart and soul of what his Lord has done for each of them, you find it still the same, forgiveness and enlightenment, grace and truth! The thing for which man searches the face of his beloved fellow-

man most eagerly, throwing his whole soul into his earnest sympathizing gaze, is to see whether in that face he can discover the assurance that God has given to that friend of his the new life of forgiveness and enlightenment, grace and truth. As the mother searches the face of her first-born to find the signs first that there is life and then that there is reason there, so does the man who knows that there is no real life without the forgiveness and enlightenment, the grace and truth of God, seek for them in his friend's face, and refuse to be satisfied until he finds them there. When he has found them he rejoices over his friend's new birth.

And now about these deepest and holiest gifts of God—grace and truth—is that true which Solomon wrote about all His mercies? When God sends these riches does He send no sorrow with them? At once there start up, as we ask the questions, memories of much in our own lives, and stories that other men have told us of their lives, which make us wonder whether the proverb has not perhaps exhausted its truth before it comes to this profoundest kind of blessing. How is it with forgiveness? When God sends that, does He not send sorrow with it? The shame! the humbleness! the miserable consciousness of ingratitude! the hard tearing away of the sin which had rooted itself into the deepest places of our souls! the self-denials! the self-disgusts! No sorrow! Is it not all sorrow, this hard and bitter labor of repentance? And then of truth! Does God give that to any man except through pain? What shall we say about the long and bitter doubts?

the horror of great darkness that is on many minds; the bewilderment among false lights on every side that distracts others? What of those days when, with the growing certainty that we cannot live without truth, there seems to be likewise a growing certainty that we shall never find it? The plucking out of old prejudices and errors which have come to be part of our life, the misconceptions of our brethren, the distrust of ourselves, what shall we say of all of these? Has it not grown to be the very commonplace of spiritual history that it is by suffering that God makes His best soil ready for the seed that He is meaning to sow in it? How thick the questions spring up as we think about it! And yet to all these questions I think there are two answers to be given. I do not say that they are satisfactory. I only think that they indicate the direction in which satisfaction lies, and help us to see that, in spite of all appearances, God does not, if we could see Him fully, send us anything but joy,—that the sorrow which comes with His spiritual mercies is something which we add to them ourselves.

The first consideration is that the spiritual treatment and the suffering which comes with it are always separable in our thought from one another. The treatment is essential. God could not make us what it is of all importance that we should be made without it. The suffering that attends on the reception of the treatment is an accident. It belongs to the condition in which the spiritual treatment finds us,—we can conceive of the same treatment finding us in other conditions and giving us nothing but un-

mixed joy. For instance, God has given me a truth, which is to me a source of endless peace and happiness. In order that it might completely reach my heart that truth had to break and tear its way through obstinacy and a settled faithlessness. God gave His truth such force, so winged it with His own convincingness, that it could conquer for itself that entrance, and in its victory over me I was hurt and suffered. Now what shall we say? Shall I declare that God sent the sorrow with the truth. The truth was unmixed joy. If it had come to an open, willing soul it would have slid like a sunbeam into its life, instead of crushing in like a cannon-ball as it did into mine. It would have ridden in at the gate like a king over flowers, instead of bursting in like a soldier through the broken wall. Can I say, then, truly that God sends the sorrow which is an accident of the condition in which His truth finds me? Can I lay the pain on Him? Is it not as if His bright stream struck some feebly built house on the sand, and swept it down to ruin? I may say that the sorrow started with the river where it sprang out of the fountain, and came hurrying down with it through all its course. That makes the river's gay laughter, as it crept through the thickets and the fields and caught the shadows of the flowers on its bosom, a dreadful mockery. May I not say more truly that the stream brought no sorrow with it, but only brought out evidently and sealed with visible ruin the sorrow which it found waiting for it in the disguise of happy safety on its bank?

And the other consideration is that the sorrow

which accompanies the reception of God's best blessings, His forgiveness and enlightenment, His grace and truth, shares subtly in the very nature of the joy that causes it. It is not wholly sorrowful. The pain of giving up a dear prejudice to make place for a truth is radiant already with the joy which that truth is to give me. This sort of transfiguration is familiar to all the best experiences of the highest lives. You and I may not understand it, but all the shining moments in the history of the human soul bear witness of the reality that is in it. The martyr stands at his stake, and we dare to pity him; we say "Your truth and faith are glorious, but how sad it is that you could not have them without this!" But he replies, "They have become glorious to me in this as I could never have seen them otherwise." Did the three children in the furnace, with the "One like unto the Son of Man" walking beside them in the flames, think that the flame was terrible? Except for it they could not have seen Him, and so it was a portion of their joy. And if when your forgiveness comes to you out of the hand of God, the repentance, the humility, the self-surrender through which you take it make it far dearer and more beautiful and precious to you than it could have been without that pain; then is not the pain itself a pleasure, and does not the soul, finding the heart of its suffering full of joy, forget the mere rough outside in which that heart of joy is folded, and triumphantly declare that when the Lord sent His forgiveness He "sent no sorrow with it?"

I think that such considerations, while they can-

not answer our question perfectly, do yet show us something of where the answer to our question lies. And all this becomes clearer if we turn from our poor attempt to describe it and see it perfectly illustrated in the life of Jesus. In that wonderful life all that we have said came to its perfect exhibition. The blessing of His Father made Him rich beyond any conception of ours. We waste poor pity upon the poverty of Jesus. There is something almost insulting in the way in which we dwell upon the privations of His earthly lot. He never dwelt on them Himself. When He said that the foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests but He was homeless, it was no weak self-pity. It was no appeal for sympathy. It was the simple fact of His life told to a scribe who had offered to follow Him,—told in order that the soul of the new disciple might be tested, that there might be no misunderstanding nor mistake. "Alone and yet not alone, because the Father is with Me,"—that is the way in which His life looked to Himself.

And now, how was it with this richness that His Father gave Him—did He, as our old proverb promises, "add no sorrow with it"? Sorrow enough there certainly was. The outward pain and inward struggle have been ever since the wonder of the world. He was the man of sorrows. The suffering of the body culminating in the agony of the Cross, the wounds of ingratitude, the wearing misery of delay and disappointment, the daily bruising of the sinless nature against sin, the burden of men's and women's troubles on his sympathy, the

separation from His Father—how all this was mingled with the richness of His Father's gift, with the joy of His own holiness and of the work that He was doing! And yet I think that as we read the dear old story deeply, there grows up in our minds a conviction that each of these truths was supremely true about our Lord which we have seen to be true also of His disciples. For Him, too, the pain was separable from the joy. The joy was of His Father's giving—the sending of the willing Son to seek His brethren. The pain that mingled with the joy was born of the meeting of the Son's holiness with the world's sin, which the Father did not make. If we can conceive of an Incarnation which, manifesting God to a perfectly sinless and obedient world, should have had no trace of suffering about it, should even have added a new delight to the already perfect happiness of Deity,—then we can see how separable in the soul of Jesus may have been the joy of His Messiahship from the suffering which His Messiahship involved; how, even in His greatest agony upon the Cross, feeling that God had given Him the privilege of Saviourhood and seeing that essential privilege separate itself and stand apart from all its accidents of woe in its own intrinsic gladness, He may even then have lifted up His failing heart and cried, "I thank Thee! Thy blessing has made me rich, and thou hast added no sorrow with it." And when you add to that the other truth, that in the pain itself was a deep heart of joy, that inasmuch as only by suffering with them could He come close to these brethren of His, and to come close to them

was His one longing desire, therefore the suffering itself was joy. When you add that, then is there not some light shed through the everlasting mystery, and can we not see how it was that out of every darkness the soul of Jesus always cleared itself into the light, how peace came after the temptation, and after Gethsemane, and the Son never ceased to thank the Father for His tried and tortured life.

And in the way in which Christ received His Father's gift is there not, O my dear friends, the constant picture of the way in which we must receive Christ ? The soul that takes the Lord and His service is sure to take pain and distress. Temptations gather round him as he timidly lets the signal of his new faith be seen. Men's misconceptions fill his ears—above all and behind all his own sins dismay him the moment that he has set out to escape from his sins through Christ. But yet he knows, or gradually learns, that the Gospel is all joy. The sorrow comes not from what God is, but from what he is. And even in the sorrow there is hidden a new joy because by it he may be more faithful, more humble, more patient, more utterly given to his Lord. Oh, let me picture to myself some poor bewildered, struggling soul hidden somewhere among these pews this morning. It is a picture of my imagination only because I do not know behind which of your faces that soul sits. But that such a soul is somewhere here is no imagination of mine but is a certain fact. That soul has heard Christ's invitation. The marvellous offer of the Lord has won its way to your acceptance. " The bread that I will give is my

flesh which I will give for your life,"—so He has spoken and so you have heard. You have taken Him, and not for all the world would you let Him go. The blessing of the Lord has made you rich. But then—but then you hesitate. Has He not added sorrow with it? Does it not seem as if He had deliberately made it hard for you to be a Christian? Perhaps it is all right. It may be all for the best that it should be hard, but surely the fact is clear. He has made it hard, not easy! O my dear friend, that is not true! The hardness has not been in Him, but entirely in you! In Him there has been nothing but love, nothing but the desire that with as gentle and as smooth a journey as possible you should come to Him. Not the Father's hand puts obstacles in the child's way to Him; not even that the child may value Him the more when he shall find Him, does He so obstruct his path. The value of Himself, which the Father would have His prodigal children learn, is not the value that comes by long denial of the prize, but the preciousness which the Father's love wins as the child learns how long it has been waiting for him, how it has struggled in every way to show itself, and how it has labored to remove every hindrance and give itself away.

I beg you, O my dear friends, to whom Christ has come and who have come to Christ, to find the deepest preciousness of your new life in its perfect freedom. Do not expect your religion to be hard. If there be hardness in it, count that hardness to be of your making, not of God's sending. Be sure that

God would rather have you believe than doubt, rather have you hope than fear, rather have you show your humility by the complete trust with which you take His mercy than by the distressed perplexity with which you wonder whether it is possible for you to take it.

XIV.

JOY AND SORROW.

"Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it."—JOHN xi. 38.

THE moment which this verse describes was doubtless one of the saddest in the life of Jesus. His friend was dead, and the Master stood in the midst of the overwhelming sorrow which his death had brought. There was the pain of bereavement in His own heart; there was pitiful sympathy with the poor sisters; and there was also the clear sight of the sadness of human life. It was impossible that the Son of Man should stand in the close presence of this one sorrow, and not feel all the great sea of sorrows, of which this was a single wave, beating upon His heart out of all the lands and all the ages! He saw the great cloud of misery overshadowing the world; He heard the great chorus of lamentation going up from the human heart; all this was in the deep groan which we can hear to-day, as millions have heard it before us, which burst from His lips as He went among the weeping family to the tomb of Lazarus of Bethany.

Is human life a joyous or a gloomy thing? This is the question to which the picture of the Son of

Man in His sorrow may naturally lead our thoughts. Strange enough it is that, after all these generations and centuries of human living, men should still ask themselves that question and differ from themselves and from each other about its answer. It is a very pathetic sign of what a confused, entangled thing the world's life is, that men cannot decide whether it is a melancholy or a splendid thing to live, and that he whose judgment runs either way shows at once his eagerness to believe, and his doubt whether his belief is right, by the way in which he denounces and almost hates the man who judges differently from himself. The man who praises life detests the man who darkens life with blame; and the man who blames life despises him who praises it. There is no battle like the battle of the optimists and pessimists. Surely it must be a mysterious thing on whose essential quality men who are always so intimately dealing with it cannot decide. Surely there must be some deeper method of answering the question than that which depends on the whim of the moment or the temperament of the man who gives the answer. Let us see whether we can make any progress towards an answer in our study of to-day.

Our time is remarkable, among many other things, for the frequency and the urgency with which the question whether human life is intrinsically joyous or sorrowful is being asked. That question has always rested on the heart of man; it has always broken from his life, but we think never as to-day. So much of the first boyish, unquestioning simplicity of life is lost, so complicated and self-

conscious and self-watchful has the human heart become, that it is not possible to say to this full-grown human being as you might once have said to humanity in its childhood, "It is not right to ask the question. Do your duty and ask nothing about happiness." The question of happiness, if not our own happiness, yet our brother-man's, reaches everywhere. It infects even the idea of duty. It must be answered. It is getting its answer, wisely or unwisely, in every heart. Therefore it is good for us to study.

You will see from the text which I have chosen how I would approach the question. It is through the consciousness of Christ. It certainly will be much to us if we can know how the world looked to Him, whether the color of life was dark or bright to those clear deep eyes which looked on it so humanly and so divinely. Who would not give anything to ask Him if we could find Him on our streets? For all men who have seen Him have felt sure that, looking into Him, they looked into the very consciousness of God, which is the final fact of things. The sum of all the world's complicated doctrines concerning Christ is this—that in Him man finds both himself and the God to whom he belongs, and so is able to read that truth which exists in the essential relation of the human life to the divine. Therefore it is that he who can learn how life appears to Christ will learn how it appears to God, and how it really is, behind all its appearances, to man.

It is good for us to verify and to correct our own

judgments by those of other men, of larger, wiser men, and, wherever we can get glimpses of it, by the judgment of that universal humanity which is wiser than the wisest of the human beings whom it includes. Not even that judgment, when we have found it, can violently dispossess our own and take its place; but it may—if we are broadminded and true, it must—enrich our judgment into its likeness, fulfil us with itself. This is what it does for me when I see Christ's thought, which is both human and divine. His thought does not kill my thought and set itself into its place. It changes my thought into itself. It turns out what is false in my thought and develops what is true; and so I come to think like Christ because other thought becomes impossible. So let us seek Christ's thought about the happiness and the unhappiness of human life. As soon as we ask the question there comes up to our memory, out of the Gospels which tell His story, two classes of His acts and words. One class is full of the sense of the joy of living. It begins with the wonder of a chorus of angels welcoming His birth. It goes on with the picture of a healthy, happy boyhood, of the first keen appetite for knowledge, of brave, enthusiastic young friendships, of the chance and desire to do good, of sympathetic intercourse with nature, of rapt intercourse with God, of great visions into the future, and at last of a complete triumph over death,—all of these blossoming out into rich words of joyousness, of trust, of hope. No man can read these pages of the life of Jesus and not know that life was joyful and beautiful to

Him. And at the same time, while anybody reads this life, he is all the time aware that it is not all. There are dark passages along with the bright ones everywhere. The songs of the angels at His birth are lost almost immediately in the cries of the child-martyrs who are murdered out of hate of Him. Then come the persecutions and the misconceptions and the awful scenes of sorrow, and the perpetual appeals of wretchedness for help. Then comes the betrayal by those whom He had trusted and the weakness of those whom He would fain make strong. There is the blow and blank of death. There is the sin which makes life worse than death. All of these pressed in upon a sensitiveness surpassing in exquisiteness what any other being ever carried. At the very outset, at the very first sight this is clear—that neither side of our human life had hid itself from Jesus. Each side of it had pled its cause before Him. Its joy had said, "Behold, how good it is to live." Its pain had cried, "Behold, how life is horrible!" Evidently the judgment which this Jesus makes must be made with the sound of both of these voices, and must include the truth which each of them tells. He cannot be ignorant of either. He cannot judge life as a pampered weakling who knows only its luxury, nor as an embittered savage who has known nothing but its pain. They will both be there. His judgment of life will be large enough to hold them both.

But then we come at once to something else. This Christ, the more we think concerning Him, impresses us with a sublime unity of nature. What-

ever various elements combine in Him cannot exist in conflict. They must be in some deeper harmony with one another. It cannot be that any being can permanently live with two ideas, inconsistent with each other, ruling in succession, first one and then the other holding possession of the life. It cannot be that now the thought of life as misery and now the thought of life as happiness should rule—one holding the other, its rival, under foot. Both must be always true. Only one must be permanently master, and the other must be always subject. Which shall be which ? Shall life be wretchedness, with strange, unaccountable, tantalizing, exasperating flashes of happiness flung here and there upon its darkness, making its great stretches only more dark ? Or shall life be one great deep stream of joy, ever and anon darkening and ensnarling itself in suffering, but always unsnarling and brightening itself again, and always keeping its great course unturned, its great song unsilenced, below every hindrance or discord which may disturb its bosom ?

Which of these two—for one or other it must be—which of these two is Christ's idea of human life ? Can there be any doubt ? Consider the very names He loves to bear. He is Jesus. He is the Saviour. He is Christ, the anointed one. His work is a redemption. What do those words mean ? Do they not of necessity involve the truth that in behind and up above and down below all life there is one great unchanged purpose of good, that every evil is a departure from that purpose, that out of the soul of that purpose He has come, that to restore all life

to that purpose is the hope and unchangeable intention of His soul? These are the first necessary meanings of Jesus. They are not merely the truths He teaches but the truths He is. It is in virtue of their being true that He is here at all. What then? The soul which carries in itself these truths has but one view of life possible for it. For it the good was before the evil, and will be after it, and is beneath it all the time. And therefore joy and the certainty that life means joy,—joy darkened and puzzled a thousand times, but never extinguished, joy always present as the fundamental consciousness of life,—is the only possible condition for that soul. And that soul supremely was the soul of Christ.

This is what Christ must have been by the necessary conditions of His being. And this is what He actually was. It is impossible to read His story with clear eyes and carry away any other picture. All His sorrow gets its intensity from the interruption which it makes to His joy. All His disappointment is dark by the shadow which is cast by His inextinguishable hope. His hate of evil is deep in proportion as His love of good is high. He expects man to be happy and never recovers from the horror of the fact that man is sad.

The world has always felt this character in Christ. It has said, "How could He feel so?" but it has never been able to doubt or to deny that He did feel so. One effort it has made to reconcile His sense that life was good with its own misgivings and belief that life was bad and sad. It has imputed to Him some notion of election. It has tried to make

out that it was to some small select privileged minority of human kind that He promised such special blessings as made it worth while for them to live; while to the great majority He left life a weary waste of woe, only touched here and there with mocking and delusive images of happiness. Men have imagined such things of Jesus, but their imaginings have always failed to hold. They have fallen away from Him, and left Him, what by the necessity of His nature, He must be,—the life, the praise, declaring that life is good, and protesting with all His soul against the misery and evil which have invaded and infected and disguised its goodness.

But there is more than this. This would seem almost to depict Jesus as changing constantly; now mourning over the world's evil, now triumphing in the world's good; and only reassured by the unchanging certainty that the good was before the evil and should be after it, that God was stronger than the devil. This were mere dualism, dividing the world between two masters, one stronger than the other, but each certainly sole ruler of his special kingdom. More intimate in the experience of Jesus is the connection of the sorrow and the joy. More perfect is the unity of His experience. Not merely in the same life but in the same thought, in the same deed the two, the joy and sadness, are united. After such union they have always been struggling in the minds of all serious men. Some men have tried to believe that, after all, the good and evil were but one, that in their essence was no difference. "Evil is imperfect good, good in the making," they have tried

to say. But against that teaching the human conscience always has rebelled. And Jesus, whose conscience always was as clear as crystal, never believed or taught like that. Two things, however, He did teach regarding the connection of the evil and the good. One was, that they took shape from the same universal circumstances of human life, and so that the same identical causes produced sorrow and joy. It was the same perpetual relationship of man with man, the same persistent free will which belonged to the first idea of humanity, the same physical nature with its passions and desires, which gave occasion alike to the sublimest heroism and to the basest self-indulgence, to the purest of human pleasure and the most exquisite of human pain. The other truth was that evil, though really evil, may be turned in its results to good. By discipline, by the revelation which it brings, pain may become the seed of joy, and even sin become the door to holiness. These are profound parts of the life and teaching of the Lord which every Christian deeply knows. By them these two discordant portions of the world are brought together. They must not be confounded with any base and blundering ideas of men that good and evil are not intrinsically different, but only seem different in the thought of men, or that evil may be done for the sake of good results. There is nothing of these ideas in Jesus; but the two truths which I just tried to state, and which are always in His mind, make joy and sorrow always parts of the one same world, and keep them always in relation to each other, while they never lose the inalienable

kingship of good and the great right of joy to rule the world.

It is the constant presence of these two ideas, I think, in Jesus which makes the freedom and directness and simplicity of all His dealing with mankind. He sees a man bad and unhappy. He knows full well how large a part of that man's wickedness and sorrow is bound up with the circumstances in which the man is living. He will set the reforming power of His Gospel at work to change those circumstances. Perhaps He will bid the man himself change them immediately, as when He commanded the rich young man to go and sell his property and give it all away. But He knows these two things: first, that the same eternal causes and circumstances which are making that man bad and unhappy may, if he treat them rightly, make him good and happy; second, that out of the very heart of evil, by the power of a new life in the man's heart, rich good may come. It is evident that to anyone who is in the power of these two truths, circumstances cannot be of the first importance. It is good that they should be altered and improved, but the new life must not wait for their improvement. The man is everything. Here is the directness and simplicity of Jesus. Here is the clearness and power with which He strikes directly at the wicked nature and the unhappy soul, and says, "Be holy, in spite of every temptation; be happy in spite of every disappointment; and so, in time, about the new heart the new life certainly shall grow."

Is it not clear enough what influence the perpet-

ual holding of these two truths must have had upon the way in which the misery of human life pressed on the soul of Christ. They saved Him from despair. They let Him feel the whole weight of the world's suffering and yet be filled with hope. This is what seems to many people to be so hard as to be quite impossible; it seems to be almost an insult to the world to be hopeful of it. It seems to be a sign of imperfect, insufficient sympathy to be able to expect the ultimate breaking away of the clouds and breaking forth of the sun. We have all known sick people whose feelings were hurt if you ventured to tell them that some day they would get well. It was a sign that you did not know or care how sick they were. And so men say, "Ah, if you felt the misery of life as I do, if these cries were in your ears which ring in mine, if these sights haunted your eyes which I never can shut out, if your heart were as tender and exposed as mine is, you could not sing your cheery song of hope, or dream that life ever could be cleared to sunshine." I do not know! I think it probably is quite impossible to make any comparison of the way in which the world's sorrow weighs on any two human souls. The difference is too much one of kind as well as of degree. But this must always be most significant—that He who past all doubt felt the world's pain and bore its burden on His soul most heavily, was at the same time supremely full of hope. It was because these truths were always present to His soul: First, that the causes which make evil may make good; and, second, that out of evil good may come.

Remember a single instance of His hopefulness. Think of poor Mary of Magdala. Men called her hopeless and abandoned. Who had abandoned her? They who had not depth or faith enough to hope. She came to Jesus, and He saw two things concerning her,—that the same passion with which she had sinned might have been in her the power of triumphant and enthusiastic goodness; and that she might be all the stronger for her weakness, all the purer because of her past impurity. In the power of these two truths His soul was filled with hope which passed over into her soul and saved her. And at the Cross and by the tomb and in the resurrection-garden, she was nearest to the Saviour and first in the privilege of the new life.

This, then, at least is clear about the power which the world's life had on Jesus—that the pain and the happiness, both of which it certainly brought, were very closely mingled with each other. Let shallower souls live in perpetual attenuation of joy and sorrow. To Jesus there was no joy which had not in it the power of sorrow; there was no sorrow which had not at its heart a beating possibility of joy. I think there can have been nothing which He did, and nothing which He saw, in which both were not present. A child was born and the splendor of the sunrise filled Christ's heart, and at the same time the perils of the perilous hours of a human existence must have made His eyes run down with tears. Did He rejoice in man's power of free-willed independence? He must at the same instant have shuddered when He remembered the power of wickedness

which it involved. Did He see a group of men gathered together on the street, or a family assembled in their home? The beauty of the social instinct warmed Him and threw its light around Him, and the pains of partings and the mischiefs of evil influence threw their darkness on His sunshine like a cloud. He saw men working, and the exaltation and the drudgery of labor both took possession of His thought. He saw men die, and, with one single throb of His heart, the fulfilment of the vanished life in the higher world which it had entered and the awful dreariness and desolation which its vanishing had left behind it in the broken home,—the two together, not separate but as one single emotion, compact of triumph and pity, richened his ever-richening human life. He came at last to die Himself, and who shall separate as they blend with each other in His soul upon the Cross, His sorrow for the world's sin which needs redemption and His thankfulness for the privilege of redeeming it? There is nothing which can more reveal Christ to us in His completeness than this mysterious and intimate mingling of joy and pain with one another in His every act and experience of life.

Do we not know something of it in ourselves, dear friends? In every deepest moment of our life have not joy and sorrow met in closest and most bewildering union? When your friend died, what a strange vision of the immortal world, shot through with the shafts of desolation and bereavement and the unnaturalness of dying! When you saw heroic poverty making character shine in the hard struggle

with contempt and need, could you separate your pity from your thankfulness? Was there ever a great success of your life which did not make you sad and sober? Was there ever a great disappointment of your life which, even while you felt its weight pressing upon you, did not begin to turn that weight to wings and inspire you with the sense of a new freedom? Has the home ever been broken by sickness, that some new light has not come in through the chinks? It is not mere consolation of pain by pleasure, nor paying off of pleasure with pain, nor rhythmic beat and necessary ordered succession of the two to one another; it is the mystery of a life disordered and yet full of healthy action, in which each act must feel the full condition of the life of which it is a part; where no gladness can be wholly glad nor any sadness wholly sad because, though sin is in the world, it is God's world still.

The world has had its centuries of sorrow and its centuries of joy. There have been ages in which history has gone burdened with the awfulness of living and the weight of sin. Then there have been other ages which have tried to forget all that and know nothing in the world but light and music. The trouble is that the two kinds of ages have kept aloof from one another. Their spirits would not mingle. The light-hearted Renaissance came only when the frightened Middle Ages were creeping off into the darkness. It was not till the gloom of Puritanism disappeared that the revel of the Restoration seized upon English life. Some day an age must come in which the seriousness of living and the

joy of living must blend with one another and make something richer than either can be by itself. In the best character of our own century it sometimes seems as if we could feel its coming. When it has come the world may be less gloomily despairing and less wildly gay than it has sometimes been, but it will be a healthier, wholesomer world to live in. It is the poet's dream of the future:

> "Years hence, perhaps, may dawn an age
> More fortunate, alas! than we,
> Which without hardness will be sage,
> And gay without frivolity.
> Sons of the world, oh, speed those years!
> But while we wait allow our tears."

In the Bible, the Old Testament has clear-cut, sharply distinguishable pictures of misery and joy. The wretched is apt to be all wretchedness and the delightsome all delight. But in the New Testament there is in every scene the subtle meeting of joy and pain, which makes it the true book of life. Who can tell whether the parable of the prodigal son is more full of sadness or of gladness? Men have called the Old Testament optimistic and the New Testament pessimistic. But each is too great for those partial names. And the New Testament as the great book of God and man holds together in its clear transparency the deep sorrow and the deeper joy of the life which man lives in his own weakness always unfolded in the strength and love of God. And the heart of the New Testament is the soul of Christ.

And now what shall we say? Have we at all

done what we wanted to do, and seen at all how this strange puzzle of a world looked to the eyes of Jesus, and what impression it fixed upon His soul? I think, in some degree, we have. I think I can look into His eyes and see how He regards it. Never are those eyes shut for a moment on its darkest tragedies. The wrongs and sorrows and perplexities, the cruel taunts of the oppressors, the deep sighing of the prisoners, mingle with every moment's music. He escapes no suffering by refusing to see and hear. He gains no complacence by indifference. At every moment He is conscious of the evil and the sad. But at every moment also He is conscious also of immortality and God. Therefore in all that mingled life, hope and joy are supreme. Despair is impossible. It is a world worth living for, worth dying for! And the life goes on its way, not thundering a chorus of light-hearted triumph which would have seemed to mock men's hearts, but singing low and strong a strain of hope and certain faith which has given courage to souls less clear-sighted and more ready to despair.

I said at the beginning that what we found Jesus to be we must ourselves become, not simply because He was it, but because the sight of it in Him became to us both revelation and power, showing us that it was the only thing for us to be content with being, and helping us to be it. Shall not the image of the divine soul of Christ responding to the world full of sorrow, open some deeper and healthier possibilities and hopes in us? What shall they be? Let me try to tell you as I bring my sermon to its end.

First, we will never shut our eyes or ears. We will not say that all is right when we know that very much is very wrong. Better almost despair than wilful self-indulgent blindness. Better to be overwhelmed than to stand on the firm shore with unwet feet, with our backs to the great sea of misery and sin which rolls and welters in its helplessness.

But, second, we will never let the two sides of life be separated from each other. Riches and poverty, failure and success, sorrow and joy, evil and good, shall be parts of one life and feel one another's presence. So shall all happiness be kept earnest with pity, and all unhappiness be kept patient and brave with hope.

For, third, it shall be in a world which is always God's world that the two stand in the presence of each other. The evil shall not have an equal chance with the good. Mercy and immortality—a divine power and a long abundant time—shall keep the good and the happy always in the place of advantage, always really master of the field.

To him who thus looks at the world and its distresses, what a chance of growing character and what an impulse of undiscouraged work are always abundantly supplied.

O my friends, you must not be careless and you must not despair. Your hearts must grow as Christ's did, but your steps must not turn back from the grave on which the stone is laid. For God is omnipotent and man is immortal! Therefore be patient and work! The end shall certainly be joy, not sorrow. The stone shall roll away and the dead

come forth. Alas for him who in this world of sorrow dares to be a trifler! Alas for him who in this world of God ceases to hope! The end shall certainly be peace. God help us all to hasten that great end by patient, faithful, cheerful service!

XV.

THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE.

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death"—ROMANS viii. 2.

THIS is Paul's cry of triumph over the great emancipation of his life. It is very interesting to see the remarkable variety of ways in which the great apostle describes his conversion. It was so real to him that it was new every morning. As his life shifted and advanced the relation to that critical event of his life when he became the disciple of Jesus Christ was always changing. There could be no better study, I think, of the real nature of conversion and regeneration than a collection and comparison of the various aspects in which the change of his own life presented itself to St. Paul, and the different descriptions that he gave of it. It would at least impress us with the idea of the largeness and the life which that experience possessed in his eyes, so that no one description could comprehend it all. I do not propose any such great study to-day; I only want to take one of the richest of his accounts of his new life, and see how far we can get at and appropriate its meaning. Hear it again: "The law of the

spirit of life in Jesus Christ has made me free from the law of sin and death."

The statement is not theological, except in the best and broadest sense. It is not technical or abstract. It is the real story of a real man's experience told in what to him was the simplest way. And it is universal. It is the story of something that is going on here in our midst, of something that has come or may come in the life of every soul I speak to. I wish we could all feel this at the beginning. Unless Paul's life was such as yours and mine might be, if all this slavery and freedom that he tells about was special and exceptional in Paul, all our best interest in Paul evaporates. If he is a curiosity and not a type, why should we preach about him? But he is a type. This experience of his is the possible experience of everybody, has been the actual experience of thousands. It has in it the deepest secret of human life. Let us see if we can find it out and understand it.

"The law of the spirit of life has set me free from the law of death." Those are great words. They touch this truth first: That only a law can really set a man free from a law. Only a better law can deliver a man out of the power of a worse law. See how true that is. A law is simply a power in orderly and continuous action. We use the word most competently, as if we understood all about it, but really that is all we know. The law of gravitation is simply the orderly and continuous working of that unknown force that draws every atom to every other. The law of the sunrise is only the orderly

and continuous operation of those powers which, combining, send the glory daily up the east. A single falling apple, a single sunrise is not a law. It is a miracle. The power must repeat itself with steady and orderly continuance. Then comes the law.

And the same is true of moral laws. We say that industry is the law of a man's life. That does not mean that once or twice, here and there, he has yielded to the necessity of work, or even labored with enthusiasm, but it suggests the constant obedience to the continual impulse, the steady pressure on his life of a well-regulated, unremitting power. If a man's law is sensuality we have in his life the ever-present power of lust working its terrible results according to its nature. If a man is under the law, in the dominion, of theft or drink, he is not the man whose life, ordinarily sober and honest, occasionally gives way, breaks down before a shining piece of booty or a tempting glass of liquor; he is the man in whom the power of dishonesty or intemperance works orderly and continuously, crushing him under its never intermitted weight. This whole impression of steady, unbroken pressure from a force behind is the impression of law. It is not fitful; it is fateful. The man is not simply vexed by it; he is held by it; he is its slave. And now what can release a man from such a pressure? Evidently only something as steady and continuous as the pressure itself. A mere temporary resistance cannot do it. A mere check in the order does not destroy the order. You do not free the stream from the great

law which is forcing it down to the sea by merely throwing a dam across it, which only hinders it and chafes it. By and by the water that you tried to fence away has broken through, and, all the more violently because you tried to stop it, the stream is tumbling and foaming along the old channel. You must make a new channel. You must slope the ground with steeper declivity another way. You must bring a new power as orderly and as continuous as the old; in other words, you must make a new law before your stream is really free from the old law and runs a new way as freely as it ran the old.

I dwell upon this because it seems to me important. Only a new law can give a man freedom from an old law. And yet every day we see men ignoring this truth. Every day we see men trying to get loose from the old despotic laws of their life, not by the establishment of any new law but by some one spasmodic struggle which is a mere log thrown across the stream, and had no real power over the current. You see a man whose law of life is idleness, any one of the men of wasted faculties who are sown along all through our society and weaken our social structure from top to bottom. There is hardly one of them who once in his life at least has not had a burst of energy, scarcely one who in some moment of shame has not determined that he would be free and gone and thrown himself headlong into some hard work in a way that startled and amazed his friends. Almost all the idle men who are really good for anything have done this once in their lives. How is it that they come back again into the ranks

of idleness and live again in the weary bondage of doing nothing? It was because they set up no new law, no law of industry. No orderly scheme, made up of motive, method, and anticipated result, no reasonable habit of industry was taken and fastened on their lives. One violent struggle was made, but a settled law laughs at a violent struggle. Any settled government makes little of mere furious ebullition, and is only afraid of consistent and organized purpose. This is the reason of these failures. Before you can get free from the law of falsehood that rules you, you must adopt and submit yourself to the law of truth. Before you can shake off the law of lust you must be willing to accept the law of purity with all its hard denials and severe disciplines. No struggle sets a man free more than a struggle can set a nation free. For both, nothing but a law can break the bondage of a law.

And this seems to me almost as important on the other side. There are good laws of life against which the evil parts of us are always trying to rebel. It is good for us to know—it is often just what we need to help and encourage us—that no outbreak of evil sets us free from the dominion which the good has been establishing over us. Not till the evil becomes a law does it really break up the law of goodness to which we have been trying to submit ourselves. The distinction between the spasmodic outbreak of evil passion, however violent, and the deliberate acceptance of evil principle is a distinction that every system of morality must draw and every soul must recognize. The Bible, that wonderful book of

human life, is full of the distinction. This last, the deliberate acceptance of an evil principle, is what it calls the sin against the Holy Ghost, so deep as to be almost unforgivable, almost irrecoverable.

Suppose some one of you has come here this morning with just this burden on his soul. You have been trying to be good. Not merely to do certain good things, but to have goodness established itself as the law in your soul. You have felt that your trial was succeeding. More and more that strong and gentle power was working in orderly and continuous action upon you, more and more the sweet and pure dominion of holiness was treating you as its servant,—but yesterday, perhaps, it all broke down. You did some flagrant deed, you spoke some brutal word that seems to you to have undone everything. You seem to have wrenched yourself out of the gracious law that has been ruling you. Alas, if such be any man's history it is very sad, it is very bad, but do not fail to see just how bad it is. No sudden volcanic eruption, however it may interrupt, can break and cast away the law. If only you have not deliberately chosen the evil and are not choosing it now, if only there is no new law of wickedness set up in your heart, my dear friend, the old law is not broken and you need not despair. You may come back penitent and humbled, less confident and perhaps, therefore, all the more strong, to put yourself anew under the great sway of the law of righteousness from which you are not cast out, for only a new law can really break an old law off.

And now with this understanding of the terms

which he uses we come back to St. Paul's statement. He is accounting for his own life, and he says that a new law has set him free from an old law, the law of life had released him from the law of sin and death. He had been living away back then under the law of sin and death. Remember what we said that a law was—a power in steady and continuous operation. It need not be violent. It need not make a noise. How silently the laws of nature work day after day, year after year, in building up or gnawing down the mighty structure of the planet. Power in steady and continuous operation, that is all. And so the law of sin and death under which Paul has lived, what was it? Nothing flagrant certainly. It does not describe the life of any outrageous ill-doer whose outbursts of iniquity had shocked and scared his brother men. Only the steady, unremitted, continuous pressure of a downward force upon the life, only the slow but certain disintegration of its nobler parts, the unseen and uninterrupted crumbling away of the truth, the purity, the lovingness, the religiousness of the nature, wickedness in not unpleasing shapes, selfishness and self-deception like disease eating out the moral healthiness,—only this is the picture of his life as he looks back upon it, the steady continuous work of evil passions killing out the noblest capacities,—the law of sin and death. How the statement stops short with the simple fact. It is terrible in its simplicity. It does not philosophize nor explain. It does not say where the law came from nor who made it. It only remembers the simple fact. The soul of the apostle seems to shudder

as he looks back and describes it. Men might explain it as they would. He only told the fact and seemed, as he told it, to feel still the hard, cold, fatal pressure of that law of sin in which he had been held so long. It was as if one of the people who went down in the sinking steamer last winter and came up again, and was saved, should tell you of the moments when he felt himself grasped tight in the terrible embrace of the ocean, fast held in the law of the water. He would not philosophize. He would use no vehement or excited words. He would not explain. Only once more it would seem to him, and he would make you feel as if the terrible, close, solid, quiet pressure of the water was on the heart and the head, the world shut out, the sky lost forever, and the man sinking deeper and deeper into the endless depths. That is the way in which Paul talks about the time when he was a slave to the law of sin and death.

You must think, as I speak, who the man is who said this about himself. It is St. Paul, and he is speaking of a time in his life when there was no young man in Jerusalem more highly considered, more respectable than he. He is speaking of the time when he was Gamaliel's disciple and first among the young students of the law. The higher inspiration had not yet entered into his life, but he was earnest, ambitious, devoted, and personally pure. This is the young man who afterwards, looking back upon his early life, knew that in all these well-seeming years he had been the subject of a steady process of moral and spiritual deterioration.

Does it not startle us when we hear such a man say such things about himself? Does it not make us in imagination lay our life down by his and ask, If that is his account of himself, what ought we to be thinking of ourselves? May it not be that we are in the same terrible grasp that was holding him? May it not be that he is simply the clearest-sighted and most serious-minded among a company of light-hearted slaves,—or rather he is a slave who has escaped, and comes back, and stands outside the walls inside of which we have lived so long and so contentedly that we have forgotten they are a prison, and tells us there how the old slavery seems to him now, and what the new liberty is like. May it not be that we are still under the law of sin and death, and that this is the real explanation, the dissatisfaction and restlessness which we have tried to soothe with games and cure with sweetmeats? My dear friends, it is not for men like us to say that a man like St. Paul was exaggerating when he described our human life. It is rather for us to see if his be not the only true description of it, whether these calm and commonplace lives of ours have not in them really all the tragedy that was so terrible to him!

We may look at this more in detail. And I beg you to set your conscience free to act upon it freely as I speak. Every bad law under which we live has its three kinds of bad effects: it tells upon the character, and upon the standards, and upon the destinies of those who live under it. It is impossible for a state to live under a bad law without being de-

moralized in its character and perverted in its judgments and injured in its prosperity—all three. And now, if we are really living under a power of selfishness which is really, however silently and placidly, getting us more and more into its power and crumbling out our moral life, it will tell in all these three ways: we shall be its slaves in our characters, in our judgments, and in our destinies. Let me take the average man of perfect respectability. To charge that man with flagrant vice would be absurd. His hands are pure of other men's money. His word may be trusted and his thoughts are pure; but if we could talk quietly and without prejudice and very freely together—talk as hardly any man living has a right to talk to any other, but as one may speak to a company of his fellow-men together, as earnestly as if he spoke to them singly—if we could talk thus, I would try to get that man to look at his own life calmly.

Consider yourself. How has it fared, first, with your character? Are you a better man or a worse than you were away back, ten, twenty, years ago? Is your moral fibre firmer or feebler? Are you more or less likely to do an unselfish, self-sacrificing thing? Are you as purely, simply true, as truly simply pure as you were when you were a boy? Do not tell me that you are just the same. That cannot be. You must be moved by some influence. You must be subject to some law. If you know that you are growing weaker and not stronger, narrower and not broader, worse and not better, there can be no doubt you are under the law of sin and death.

And then think of your judgments. How is it? Can you speak up boldly and pronounce upon the moral character of the actions that are done about you with a fearless and unhesitating voice? Is there nothing, no power of venerable tradition, no fear of biting ridicule, to make you disguise and pervert and color the straight, clear standards of your soul? Can you call the bad man bad, the mean man mean, the hypocrite a hypocrite, and the unpopular saint a saint? If not, if the false standards all around you distort your judgments and frighten your courage, what can you say about yourself in your weak conformity? Are you not a slave to the law of sin and death, to the evil tendency that is working in the world? And then think of your destiny. Is it not true that you are suffering now the consequences of sins that you did long ago? Your past sin as well as your present has you in its power. What means that ache in your body, what means that foul association in your mind? Are you the same that you would be if you had begun to live and sin this morning, and had not lived and sinned for years, with fathers and mothers who have lived and sinned before you? Ah, my dear friends, do you not see that it needs no violent, excited words. Every time we look into our characters, our judgments, or our conditions,—every time we rise and try to stir into a better life we find the law of sin holding us back So long as the drop flows with the current it seems to be free; so long as we are satisfied with our life it seems as if there were no slavery about it. The moment one drop tries to

breast the current it finds its helplessness. The moment we try to escape out of our worldliness and selfishness, there tightens about us the hard, close grasp of the law of sin and death.

And now we must pass on. This is the law of death which Paul remembered. But from this law he had been set free, and in these triumphant words he tells us what had delivered him. The law of the spirit of life hath set me free from the law of death. See, in the first place, how true what we said before is: only a law can set the man free from a law. Nothing less radical, less persuasive, less continuous than the power that enslaves can be the power to free. No mere shock of galvanic movement can stop the law of death that is working in the moral nature. What can stop death? What can go underneath the tyranny and universality of decay and undermine and conquer it? Nothing but that which is the old and triumphant and beautiful enemy of death everywhere! Nothing but the spirit of life! O that eternal struggle that pervades a universe which is always dying and yet ever living anew! The struggle of the spirit of life with death! In every growing tree, in every constantly decaying, constantly renewing body, in every strange vitality of nations and of institutions, everywhere there is the struggle of the spirit of life with death. It is a positive, strong power everywhere grappling with the monster that tries and sometimes seems to rule the world.

And if there be any consistent power of goodness able to cope with and conquer the ever-present

power of wickedness—that in the moral world will be what this mysterious vitality is in the world of physical things, the law of the spirit of life which can set men free from the law of death. Then take St. Paul again. O my friends, read with your hearts as well as with your eyes, hear with your hearts as well as with your ears, as he goes on to tell us where he found this "Law of the spirit of life." "The law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ," he says, "has set me free." Ah! he is back now where he belongs, and we are back, out of all abstractions and speculations, in the very mention of the name of Him of whom it is the joy of the Christian minister to preach. It was in the example and the redemption of Jesus Christ that St. Paul found the power which alone was able to meet and master this force of moral degradation and deterioration which he saw in the world and which he felt in himself. He had felt in himself and he was looking to see in the world, the power of a personal Christ, everywhere believed in, everywhere loved, become the power of a new freedom, become a spring-time for the winter-bound humanity.

It is the old story, as you see. How old, how ever new it is—Christ the freedom, Christ the life! Paul says that Christ has set him free. History, if we bade her open her solemn mouth, would tell us how largely the world has been set free by Christ, and how He will yet break all the fetters that are left. But most important for us, if any of us realize the slavery that I tried to describe a while ago, will be one question,—Can Christ set us free? Can He,

and will He, and how? Indeed He can and He will, and so simply! We must go back to the three forms of the slavery that I described. First of all, what does Christ do to free the character from the power of sin? That, of course, is the deepest, hardest, most essential thing. Unless He can do that, of what avail is anything else that He can do? What benefit would it be to have every consequence of sin taken off, and every false standard about us rectified, if all the while the heart stayed bad and bred new badness out of its own unchanged nature? That is the superficialness of many half-forms of Christianity. But Christ comes and says: "No! a new heart you must have, and a new heart I will give you." It sounds mysterious, but with all its mystery it is inspiring. It suggests and prophesies just what we want. "You must be born again. You must have a new life," He says; and then He says, "I am that new life"; and still again, when we ask how we are to get hold of Him, the new life, and make Him ours, He says, "If any man love me he will keep my commandments, and I will come to him." That is the old story, so old and yet so always new. It is love for Christ that is to be the regenerating power. From love through obedience into communion,—that is to be the course of the regenerated life. Here I am held in the law of sin and death,—held, that is, by the steady and continuous power of moral evil, slowly, steadily, degenerating, pressed down away from goodness into sin. No sudden struggle, no spurt of rebellious repentance, is going to save me. Again and again, indignant

with myself, impatient with the growing earthliness of my life, I have leaped up and broken loose, but it was useless. I could not get free so. It was a law that held me. As well might some bold wave that had flung its spray up against the clouds think that it had escaped from the universal law of the tides. Another law must come in, another power just as positive and steady and persistent as the power from which I want to get free. Then Christ comes—He puts Himself before the heart. There is something in that heart that is made to love Him. Superficial, on the top of the heart, lie those passions with which it loves wickedness. Deeper down, unstirred as yet, lies the diviner faculty of loving Him, the perfect goodness. By and by as He stands there, patient, expectant, those powers that were made for Him begin to feel Him, buried as they are, just as the little buried seed feels the sun which has come and is standing in the heaven over it, waiting for it to rise. Then there must come a great upheaval, a great reversal in the soul. That which was undermost must become uppermost. The heart in its own way becomes changed. There is more or less of conscious tumult. That does not matter. But the result is something definite and positive. The old law of selfishness has given place to another power, just as positive, just as persistent, and the soul is obedient to the new law of the love of Christ. The life which it now lives in the flesh it lives by the faith of the Son of God, a faith that works by love. This is the freedom of the character, the law of sin and death broken through,

broken to pieces by the law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ.

And with this freedom once established the other freedoms follow easily. When the character is really free in Christ the mere bondage of the standards and circumstances about us cannot long imprison us. Many a Christian, becoming gradually, strongly certain of the love of Christ, has looked about with fear and said, "O if I could only take this sweet new life off into a wilderness and live it there! O if I could only carry my new heart into a new world that was not full of the traditions and conventionalities of sin! But here! what can I do? What chance has my poor piety among the venerable habitudes of worldliness in the midst of which it has got to live? What possibility is there that it can stay pure and unperverted?" Many a Christian has asked the question anxiously, almost despairingly; and the answer has come to many a Christian with unexpected convincingness as his new life went on. He found the power of the new law of righteousness. He found that when he once was free in himself it was a wonderfully easy thing to tread across the prejudices and conventionalities which outwardly tried to bind his freedom. The new law of the new life was stronger than the old law of sin and death. Law had met law and conquered. I think there is nothing that one would say with more entire confidence to the young Christian, whose soul was really growing full of the love of Christ, but whose first new joy in the Saviour was clouded with anxiety as to the fate of this new experience in the midst of the

worldly world in which it would have to live, than just this,—"Do not fear, you need not fear for that. You have really no idea how weak to a man whose heart is full of manly love for Christ appear the temptations that seemed before so terrible. The outward tyranny of sin breaks easily when once its inward power is gone. It seems to you as if it would be a terrible thing to be ridiculed, terrible to have men point the finger at you and say, 'There goes the Christian.' Be a Christian, and the terror is all gone. The only sting that will be left in the ridicule will be shame that you deserve it so little." This one might say with perfect confidence. There will be struggles of the world still to retain its slave, and very often it will seem to have got him, but it never can really hold him and bind him and crush him so long as he is really, inwardly, the servant of Christ. If the Son has made him free, he shall be free indeed.

And then there remains only one other part of the bondage of sin—namely, its consequences. However free I am now, there is the past, there are the sins of my youth and the transgressions that have filled my riper years. What shall I do with them? I need not tell you out of what deep instincts of justice in the human soul that question rises to the human conscience. It is no artificial fear. It comes out of no mere fiction or religious terrorism. The human soul feels the sin of its own past binding it, without one word of revelation save that which is written in its own nature. And from that sin of its past what can deliver it, except the clear free for-

giveness of Him against whom the sin was committed,—the opening of the great hand in which that past is held so that it is dropped down, down into the gulf of oblivion to be seen no more forever. "Forgiveness" is the golden word of this last liberty. "Your sins and iniquities will I remember no more!" The liberating work of Christ is perfect when having filled the heart with the new love of Himself, He says to it, "Go, and forget the past except for gratitude and warning." "I forgive you." These words, simple and deep with all the majesty of His nature, reach back and sweep a mighty hand across the blotted record of the past, reach in and spread a peace over and through the troubled conscience, and the man is free. No past sin holds him any longer; no consequences terrify him. Not merely the obstacles before him and the reluctance within him are broken; the chains behind him are broken too; he is regenerated and he is forgiven. It is the perfect liberty of the child of God.

I know that I have not justly described the new life that the Saviour gives. No man can tell it worthily, for it is infinite; but just as one man may say to another, "Do you see the ocean or the sunset?" and the words may open before that other's eyes a glory that no words can tell, so to souls which stand close to it, which perhaps are within its light already, the feeblest word may open the richness of the new life of Christ. I am only anxious that you should know how real it is,—no fancy, no theory, but the true story of human life. Is it mysterious? Who dares look at the mysterious life of man and

feel that anything but an account that is full of mystery can satisfy that life? Is it sad? What can be sadder than this life, divided between hopeless apathy and hopeless struggle, which millions of men are living. O how sad it is! Does it break into a bewildering splendor of promise? What promise can be too splendid for the child of God to whom His Father promises Himself!

Only believe that this is the possible story of your life, and then take it up and realize it. Only see the possibility of freedom as clearly as you feel the present slavery. Then, in the Lord's impartial love, there is no reason why your voice should not join in with Paul's and all the rest whom we hear singing their freedom in the New Jerusalem on which the Bible opens,—"Worthy the Lamb who hath redeemed us." "The law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ has made us free from the law of sin and death."

XVI.

THE SECRET OF THE LORD.

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him."—PSALM xxv. 14.

EVERY living thing which is really worth the knowing has a secret in it which can be known only to a few. The forms and methods of things lie open to whoever chooses to study them, but the essential lives of things are hidden away where some special sympathy must find them. We can all recognize how true this is of men. A certain shrewd observation of mankind soon lets us into the ordinary laws of human working. A careful watching of any fellow-man soon lets us understand his laws, and we can say pretty surely how he will act in any certain circumstances; but behind all such shrewd observations and all that they discover there is something that every man holds back from us; and the more of a man he is, the more conscious we are of this reserve. It is this secret of men that gives them their interest. They are not mere machines whose mechanism you can completely master. The man is in behind and deeper than his actions. Many a man's actions you comprehend, but only

with a very few do you feel that you have really got hold of the secret of the man. You know the outside of a hundred houses in town, but only of your own and one or two others do you know the inner chambers.

The more of a man a man is, the more secret is the secret of his life, and the more plain and frank are its external workings. A small and shallow man tries to throw a mystery about the mere methods of his life, he tries to make his ways of living seem obscure. Where he goes, how he makes his fortune, whom he talks with, what his words mean, who his friends are,—he is very mysterious about all these, and all because the secret of his life is really weak, because he is conscious that there is no really strong purpose of living which he himself understands. It is a shallow pool which muddies its surface to make itself look deep. But a greater man will be perfectly frank and unmysterious about these little things. Anybody may know what he does and where he goes. His acts will be transparent, his words will be intelligible. Yet all the while everyone who looks at him will see that there is something behind all, which escapes the closest observation. The very clearness of the surface will show how deep the water is, how far away the bottom lies. There is hardly a better way to tell a great man from a little one.

Whether we can discover such a secret of life in other men or not, every one is more or less aware of it in himself. We all know how little other people know about us. The common saying that other

people know us better than we know ourselves is only very superficially true. They do see certain tricks in us which we are not aware of ; they do see the absurdities of some of our behavior which we think is dignified; but, if we are at all thoughtful and self-observant, they do not get at the secret of our life as we know it. They do not know the mainspring, the master-motive as we do who feel it slowly unwinding and moving all the mechanism. It often arms us and puts vigor in us to be sure of this. Our light behavior may be regulated by a reference to men's superior knowledge of it, but no man can live strongly who is not sure that after all he understands himself better than any other man can understand him. His own conscience, his own consciousness he must not despise. He is only a miserable weathercock if he does.

Such is the secrecy of a man's secret. But still there are with all of us some men who possess our secret more or less. The secret of a man's life I have made to consist in its purpose. It is its spirit, its intention. Any man may know what I do, but hardly any man can know as I know myself what I know by doing it. It is the same with every living thing. Nature with her great life has her botanists who tell us what she does with wonderful accuracy, and she has her poets who catch her meaning and her spirit. The institutions of our land show their workings to every keen-eyed politician, but they open their heart, their genius, only to a few philosophic statesmen.

Now with regard to men, we can see something of

what is necessary before one can read another's secret. Who is it that can really get at the motive, the genius of your life? What must his qualifications be? It is not mere curiosity,—we know how that shuts up the nature which it tries to read. It is not mere awkward good-will; that, too, crushes the flower which it tries to examine. What is it? It must have certain elements in it which we all know. And the first, the most fundamental, the most necessary of them all, is respect. Just think of it. You cannot show the real secret of your life, the spring and power of your living, to any man who does not respect you. Not merely you will not, but you cannot. Is it not so? A man comes with impertinent curiosity and looks into your window, and you shut it in his face indignantly. A friend comes strolling by and gazes in with easy carelessness, not making much of what you may be doing, not thinking it of much importance, and before him you cover up instinctively the work which was serious to you and make believe that you were only playing games. So it is when men try to get hold of the secret of your life. No friendship, no kindliness, can make you show it to them unless they evidently really feel as you feel that it is a serious and sacred thing. There must be something like reverence or awe about the way that they approach you. It is the way in which children shut themselves up before their elders because they know their elders have no such sense as they have of the importance of their childish thoughts and feelings.

Now it is just this respect, this reverence, I take it,

that is expressed in my text by the word fear. You must believe that there is something deep in nature or you will find nothing there. You must have an awe of the mystery and sacredness in your fellow-man, or his mystery and sacredness will escape you. And this sense of mystery and sacredness is what we gather into that word fear. It is the feeling with which you step across the threshold of a great deserted temple or into some vast dark mysterious cavern. It is not terror. That would make one turn and run away. Terror is a blinding and deafening emotion. Terror shuts up the apprehension. You do not get at the secret of anything which frightens you, but fear, as we use it now, is quite a different emotion. It is a large, deep sense of the majesty and importance of anything, a reverence and respect for it. Without that no man can understand another. And so "The secret of a man is with them that fear him."

And now we pass over to our text. David speaks of the "Secret of the Lord." Have we not reached some sort of notion of what he means by that and by what he says of it, that it "is with them that fear Him"? God's works are everywhere. The world is full of them, and any man with open and observing eyes may know a great deal about God from all His works. It is not hard to read His power. His wisdom shines upon us from a multitude of adaptations. But all the time we know these are not God. Somewhere behind them all, somewhere within them, moving them all and yet infinitely greater and more spiritual than

all of them, there is He, the Maker and the Guider of the whole. He has His inner character. He has His dispositions towards us whom these works of His touch at last. He has His purposes and intentions in them all.

And some souls we can see that seem to have attained to and to live in all this. How clearly it marks the difference between two classes of believers in and servants of God ! One knows God's methods and tries to do His will, sees what He wants and catches it up and tries hard to accomplish it, works on from task to task, taking each as it is given but not knowing in the least what it all means, only knowing that God has ordered it. That is one sort of life. We will not dare disparage it. It stirs up our enthusiasm as we gaze upon it. But there is another which we know is better. Another soul does understand what God means by it all, does enter into God's idea. It sees the love which lies behind every commandment and, continually cognizant of the perfect divine nature, it feels at once how far it is from that nature, and knows that the one purpose which God has concerning it is to draw it towards and shape it into Himself. The making of man like Himself by the power of love,—that, in one word, is the purpose of God which this soul sees, feels everywhere, enlightening, interpreting everything. That is the secret of the Lord!

My dear friends, do not say that such an idea as that can really make no difference, that one man may have possession of it, and another may not have it, and yet their lives be just alike. Rather think how

different your life would be if you had everywhere and always this secret of the Lord. What is your life? Is it this circle of actions that men see? Perhaps it might not alter. Perhaps you might go on rising and sleeping, eating and drinking, and doing business, just as you do now. But if your life really is the way you do these things, the comfort and the culture that you get out of them, the good you do to others and yourself by doing them, would not that all be altered if in every one of them you knew and felt the presence and power of God loving you tenderly, and by His love making you like Himself. The hammer strikes the iron that is on the anvil, and if the iron knows only the power of the hammer it yields doggedly and hardly to the blows. But behind the power is a purpose. In the fine and gentle brain of Him who holds the hammer is a thought of beauty, an untold, unembodied fancy, a secret which He is purposing to work out into expression in this stiff, black iron. Let the iron grow conscious of that purpose, let the secret of the worker be with the material on which he works, and will it make no difference? The enthusiasm of the worker enters into the work. It struggles itself towards its destined shape. Every blow that falls on it is a delight. The rigid vine tries to curl itself in leaves and round itself in fruit. All life has entered into it with the secret of its Lord.

It seems as if, looking back in history, we could see certain ages which evidently had, and certain other ages which had not, the secret of the Lord. There have been times when the general heart of

men seemed to be impressed with the spiritual purposes of God, times when the life was more than meat to multitudes of men. The certainty that God meant something spiritual by it all has run through everything; it has inspired the king upon his throne, the general at his army's head, and the women at their work. Blunders enough such times have to show, more blunders than the times which smoothed all the great deeps of purpose out of the world and thought that God had no secret. It is not strange that hard and clumsy hands should make their blunders just in proportion to the fineness of the things they handle. But still these spiritual times, such times as those of the great Reformation, stand out forever in their difference from other ages, touched with a diviner color, and lifting up their heads with a more humble and majestic dignity.

We know in our own lives, I am sure, something of such a difference. Some times there have been when God's secret has been with us, when this divine purpose, the making of us into a holiness like His own, has shone out everywhere. It has startled us when we least expected it. It has lurked in our pleasures and our pains; we have unfolded some joy which chance seemed to have dropped in our way, and there it was; we have taken up some burden that lay in our path, and there it was again. We have followed out a friendship, and by and by we have seen how through that friendship God was bringing us to Himself. Again, a friendship has snapped and broken, and in its ruin we have found the same purpose manifest; we and our friend were

to go by different roads, but both to go still to the same end, to holiness in God. Sometimes, it may be, such a perception of God's purposes, such a hold on the secret of the Lord, has been with us for a long time; and then perhaps we have lost it; it has seemed incredible that there was any spiritual meaning in life. Mere duties, duties, duties, hard and objectless, waves out of a mysterious ocean of divine authority, which brought no word from the divine character, which said nothing intelligible to us, have beat monotonously on our life. But we could never quite forget the sight that we had seen; we never could deny that there was a purpose though we had lost sight of it, that God had a secret though we had lost it.

Let us not think that this strange, painful alternative comes of God's design. God's secret is not kept secret by any arbitrary cruelty of His. He does not tantalize or taunt us. He shows all of us always all of Himself that He can. That is the basis of all faith about Him. Without believing that first of all, we could believe nothing. And the Incarnation was the opening of every door into this secret of God,—this deep abiding spiritual purpose of His nature. Whoever really knows Christ knows God's secret—"that men may be perfect even as He is."

It is strange indeed as we look back to see how men have cheated themselves with strange beliefs about the way in which God, the great Father, gave the knowledge of Himself to His children. "There was a secret of the Lord,"—that men understood full well, a close and loving friendship which let man

into the deep purposes of God—and some men had this secret and delighted in it, and other men, wishing perhaps that they had it, went through life without it. What made the difference? And it was natural for men to think of favoritism, to get some idea of arbitrary preference, of some election, by which God gave to one choice child what He denied to the rest. There is always this tendency to make that arbitrary which is essential. It seems as if it in some way relieved the burden of thought and responsibility. But any idea of election is really at war with man's primary thought of God, and ultimately makes men sceptics. The only tenable idea is that God will give Himself just as largely and as speedily to man as is possible. Live in that idea as the first certainty of your religion, always, I beg you. And the possibility must depend on man's receptive power. The impossibility, if there is any, must be not in God, but in man. That, too, is sure. Now it is just this receptive power which is described here under the great word, fear. Apply to God all that we said of man, and we shall know what fear means here. It is that large awful sense of God's nature which opens our nature to His coming in. It is not that fear which love "casts out," but a fear which abides with and makes part of and is essential to entire love. Tell me, can you ever love any person perfectly whom you do not also fear, for whom you have not some such reverence as makes you dread to hurt or to offend them, whose anger you are not afraid of? Men call it love sometimes when these are absent, but love without respect has lost

the substance and the essence of itself, and is mere passion. Men say, "I cannot love God if I have to fear Him." My dear friend, I always want to say, you cannot love God unless you fear Him, that is the true truth.

There is indeed something Old Testament-like in the specification of fear as the quality to which God can reveal Himself most deeply. But the Old Testament and the New Testament are not in conflict. At the bottom they are really one. They show the brazen and the silver sides of the same truth. And very often now I think we feel the need, both for ourselves and other people, of the Old Testament side of truth. We cannot overestimate the love of God. We cannot say too often to ourselves, "God loves us." But there is something—have we not all felt it as we have read the religious books and listened to a good deal of the preaching that is most in vogue ?—there is something of an easy familiarity with God, which loses His secret. The frightened devotee who stands afar off and in mortal terror sends his prayers through a multitude of intermediaries to a God whom he dare not approach, he certainly is not learning deeply of God, the secret of God is not with him. But, on the other hand, the ready zealot, who pours his gushing prayers into the divine ear as he would talk to his own boon companion, neither is he understanding the Almighty. Always there is before us that figure of the publican, who would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, who beat upon his breast. There was fear, but there was love certainly, and there was knowledge cer-

tainly. One misses very often, in our modern feeling towards God, that exquisite mingling of reverence and familiarity which we see in the apostles' intercourse with Christ. As soon as religion becomes trustful and affectionate, it is apt to grow weakly sentimental and fondly garrulous. The mediæval nun talking of Christ like a mortal lover, or the modern exhorter singing of Jesus as if He were to be won by fulsome epithets and pathetic tunes—in these we feel the lack of something solid and serene and simple which was in Peter and in John. What was that something? How can we name it except thus, that it was the fear of Jesus? As we read all their life with Him, and see them calmly gathering more and more of Him into themselves, it seems as if those words told the whole story. The secret of their Lord was with them because they feared Him.

Sometimes we can seem to see such a Christianity now. Earnest without excitement, loving without familiarity, a man or a woman is always near to Christ and yet never touches Him, never speaks His name, without awe. None of the first sacredness has melted away with time. The prayer to-night is fuller of the sense of what a stupendous thing it is to pray, than was the first faltering petition. Duty by which the soul expresses itself to God is quiet and not feverish, but full of deep delight and sacredness. Love deepens every hour, but reverence is always deepening with it, and to this ever-deepening reverence and love the nature and purposes of God are always opening; and so in such a life, not far off in the apostolic ages, but walking here among us

now, the same truth is fulfilled again, and the "secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

How, then, can we know God? Men bring their different directions, and we take them all and see some good in almost all of them, but after all we come to this, that the only good in any of them must be in the power they have to bring in us a loving fear of God, to which alone enlightenment can come.

One man says, "If you want to know God, you must be punctilious about religious duty; you must go to church; you must omit no form; you must be where God is; so you shall see Him." Yes, just so far as rite or sacrament does really show you His majesty, just so far as all these things do really make it a more terrible thing to you to do what God disallows, just so far they are rich in revelation. Not in themselves! They are mere windows; keep them pure and hold them Godward and then through them you shall see God.

Another man has quite another thing to say. To know God you must go among His works; His world will tell you of Him. Not in the church but in the woods; not out of the Bible but out of the sky you will read what He is. Again, remember, if that be the religion to which you are most drawn, that no flush of delight in nature, no exaltation in the opening spring or sober seriousness of autumn days, does really bring God's secret to you unless it really gives you a personal fear of Him, a dread of wronging Him, a jealous, loving watchfulness over yourself for His sake.

I know that Christ Himself had this. The fear of God, a fear that is sublimely compatible with love, —we talk of it, we try to picture what it is, but look at Him and see it perfectly. Was not He always fearing God? Was there a dread in all His life like the dread of doing what God would not wish? And yet what love! Into that loving fear flowed the whole secret of the Lord, that knowledge of the Father that made the Son's perfect unity with Him.

Both in the temple and in the world of nature Jesus gathered this fear and all the knowledge that it brought. From both of them we may gather it too, but most of all, above both these, we are to gather it from Him. There is the final answer to one question which I most wish to leave with you. How shall I have God's secret? By fearing Him! How shall I fear Him? By most clearly seeing Him! How shall I see Him? Here, where He is manifest in Christ. Really know Him. Get truly face to face with that Person. By true obedience understand what He is, and then the fearfulness of God, the greatness of His nature and His love will take possession of you, and in that atmosphere the secret of the Lord shall come to you and be with you. Can you understand that? Is there anything in your experience already to interpret it? Have you indeed found that, as you knew Christ more, God was more full of majesty and more near to you both at once? Then keep on! Heaven at last will be the perfect sight of Christ. To them that see

Him perfectly the fear of God will come, a fear full of love and glory; and then through the fear will come the knowledge, and the secret of the Lord shall be with those that fear Him more and more perfectly forever.

XVII.

THE GREAT ATTAINMENT.

"Worthy to stand before the Son of man."—LUKE xxi. 36.

THERE is all through the Bible as there is all through the best and most earnest thought and life of men the vision of a great attainment. That man, the individual man and the universal man, is what he is only in preparation for something far vaster and more perfect that he is to be,—this is the practical doctrine of all earnest and religious men. It appears in all religions. It appears in all the earnest life which will not call itself religious—this doctrine of the great attainment, this belief and the lofty something which it is possible for man to become, although no man, purely man, has become it yet. What would the world be without that belief? How the hearts of men have fed on it and lived by it! It has kept them from despair and been their light in darkness, the soul of their life-long struggle.

In the religion of Christ the doctine of the great attainment puts on its full glory and takes its central place. Always there is something which humanity in general and which this man and that man by himself is struggling to become. It is not wholly clear.

It cannot be because no man has reached it and measured it and brought back the report. No report which the man who had reached it could bring back would be intelligible to those who were still far away from the completeness of which they were told. But dimly as it has been known, its real existence has been the central truth of Christianity.

And the Christian teachings have viewed this great attainment from many sides and have given to it many names. Sometimes they have simply called it "being perfect," sometimes they have seemed anxious to bind it more closely to Christ and represent that it was only attainable in Him. And then they have used such phrases as this which Jesus uses in our text, the phrase of which I want to speak to you this morning.

Jesus bids his disciples to watch and pray so that they "may be accounted worthy to escape all these things which are to come to pass," and "to stand before the Son of man." He has been telling his disciples of wonderful things which are to come. "Signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring. Men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." The great result and consummation of all the mighty changes which are to take place in the earth is to be "the coming of the Son of man." And then Jesus looks his disciples in the

face and says, "Watch and pray that ye may be counted worthy to stand before this Son of man."

As I look at these great words and try to understand them, I think there are three questions which we want to ask and answer:

1. Who is the Son of man who is to come?
2. What is meant by His coming?
3. What is it to stand before Him when He comes?

Let me say something upon each one of these questions.

1. Who is the Son of man? There cannot be a doubt in the mind of any one who stands there in the Jewish temple, and hears these words spoken by Jesus, that He who speaks is speaking of Himself. He is the Son of man. But the words have a history. In the Old Testament there are certain passages in which all men are called the sons of man. The Scripture never shrinks from that broad truth, though it is always ready to go beyond it and declare that there are certain men to whom the sacred name peculiarly belongs. David says freely, "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of man that thou so regardest him?" There every man is a "son of man." But by and by, in a more restricted way, we find the name given peculiarly to men who are representative men, to men in whom the qualities and functions of all men seem to be especially embodied. Thus it is given to the prophets, those men among men, who spoke for all humanity to God and to whom God spoke for all humanity. Eighty times the prophet Ezekiel is

addressed by God under this title, "Son of man." Then next the name was taken up and used for one of the titles of the Messiah, that mysterious, ever-expected utterance of God in human life which never left the Hebrew's mind. "Behold one like the Son of man," says Daniel, "came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days." Everywhere in the Old Testament the "Son of man" tends to become the expression of manhood in its highest representative, where it comes nearest to, where it touches upon divinity. All the while as this divine identity of manhood comes forth into utterance, the truest manhood is finding its expression, and it is this truest humanity made truest by being most deeply filled and fired with divinity, this it is which wherever it is found is called the Son of man.

No wonder then that when the New Testament opens, and the Incarnation comes, the old words should be taken up by the Incarnate Son of God and used by Him as one of His favorite descriptions of Himself. He uses the words of Himself, but others do not use them of Him. No one but Jesus Himself ever calls Jesus the Son of man. It is the declaration of His own consciousness that because His nature was the human nature inhabited and inspired by the divine, because of that fact, it was supremely the human nature. He was the truest man whose feet had ever trodden on the earth. Because He knew Himself the Son of God, He loved to call Himself the Son of man.

Are there not, then, two answers to our question,

Who is the Son of man? The Son of man is Jesus Christ. The Son of man is the complete, the representative, the ideal humanity. And yet these answers are not two but one. The Son of man is the complete ideal humanity set forth in Jesus Christ. It is the struggle of all human life recognized as reaching its great attainment in Him in whom the human life has touched and joined itself to the divine. Children heard the name and caught something of its meaning as, looking into His gracious face who blessed them, they caught sight of the goal of their humanity far, far away. Young men felt their human souls stirred by His life as by a bugle-call. Men in this middle tumult of their active years felt His presence as the element which brought them intelligence and peace. The Son of man,—the world has loved the name and Him who bore it because it answered the conviction of its own heart that somewhere there was a perfect man, and that the perfect man was the true man!

2. And then our second question follows—What is meant by the coming of the Son of man? Here is the world, this theatre of life. Upon its stage come men and generations. In itself it is nothing but a scene for action. The action of man which goes on upon it gives it its dignity and meaning. Man has been coming and going in all the acts of the long drama. And now see what is meant by the tidings which sound through the air and make the whole creation start and tremble with expectancy. "The Son of man is coming!" it declares. "The Son of man!" That is the perfect man, the

very manifested soul and essence of humanity, man full of divine influences, showing forth the divine nature that is in Himself. This higher man, this perfect man, this Son of man is coming.

Again I pause a moment just to think what a significant meaning there is in the phrase "The Son of man" as representing the flower and perfection of humanity. The son always is the flower of the father's life. The son draws forth into himself the essence of the father's being. The father looks into the bright face of his eager, fresh-hearted son and says, "There is myself without the base things which have fastened themselves to myself, without my habits, my prejudices, my hatred, and my doubts. There is my pure self. There is what God made me to be." A million disillusionings will not forbid the father of to-day to look in his boy's face and see there the flower and perfection of himself. The son of any man is that man showing himself his real belonging to a higher life. And just exactly so the Son of man in general is man in general showing himself, his intrinsic divinity, his real belonging to God!

We all believe in human progress. Let us ask ourselves whether there is a more beautiful or a more intelligible description of the progress which we all anticipate than, understood as I have tried thus to define it, is the expression, "The coming of the Son of man." It declares at once that the advance and improvement of the world is to have its source and soul in the condition of its human inhabitant. Not in the clearing of its forests and the unfolding

of its subterranean treasures and the exploring of its icy fastnesses and the redeeming of its arid plains, not in the bridging of its rivers and the great flights of ships like flocks of birds across its oceans; not in these, nor in any material victories like these, does the real progress of the world consist. Only in the coming of the perfect man, only in the Son of man, the true human outcome of all the generations of humanity, leaving all that is corrupt and base and bad and therefore unhuman behind, bringing forth into clear utterance and power all the intrinsic God-likeness of humanity—only in that, only so, in the coming of the Son of man, is the perfection of the world to come.

Let us give wings to our imagination for a moment and picture to ourselves how, in one or two of the departments of life, this coming of the Son of man is needed; and the need is felt more perhaps to-day than ever with a hopeful expectation. Look at government. What is the meaning of the Democratic impulse which everywhere is taking possession of the nations? It is the conviction that in the government of man by man lies the true salvation of the world. The government of man by man! Not by this man or that man, the choice of chance, the accident of birth, not with any reasonable presumption uttering the better nature of the men he rules, but the government of man and man, of the coarser, ruder, more brutal body of a nature by its finer soul, by its best men, set up to rule not because they are intrinsically different from the nature which they govern, but because they are its true self! This is

the meaning of Republican institutions. This is the coming of the Son of man in the world's politics.

And look at learning. There are two great demands with regard to learning which, I suppose, we can all hear wandering about, now louder and now fainter, but never dying out, in the halls of our colleges and in the conferences of the men who talk about education to-day. One is the demand that learning should be useful; the other is the demand that learning should be free—that is, not arbitrarily confined to any chosen caste. It must be useful, and it must be free. Not as the ornament or luxury of a favored few must those truths of the universe be monopolized. Almost as if a few men had dug all the coin which the earth contains to build great statues for their palaces, or gathered in all the forests off of all the hills to keep their vast halls warm, so does it seem now to the world when it is told of how in other days wisdom and knowledge were assumed to be the appropriate possession of a learned class and not the rightful possession of all men. Very vaguely, very basely, very narrowly, the usefulness of knowledge no doubt often is conceived—but the idea is there. It is the human idea; man, all men, in contrast to the natural world on one hand and to the interests of a few chosen men upon the other; knowledge, the servant and the food of man, of all men—that is the idea of modern education. The progress of that idea marks the coming of the Son of man in the world of learning.

And then, again, look at our social life, at all

which man has to do with fellow-man. I dare not undertake to compare the present with the past. One so easily seems to become enthusiastic and optimistic when he ventures to say how much purer, how much loftier, how much more unselfish the relations of men with one another, taken at large throughout the world, are in our generation than they have ever been in any generation before this. But let us simply think how in every age the best minds, the best souls have always come to one deep certainty about mankind—the certainty that only in unselfishness, only in forgetfulness of themselves and service of their brethren, could men come to their own best completion. That is a wonderful conviction for all the best souls in all ages to have reached. It involves certain great convictions. It involves this conviction certainly—that the world's completion is to come about, not by the completeness of the single soul, but by a broad elevation of the whole life of mankind, in ministering to which each single soul will gain its own best completeness, yet not as an end but as a means. What is that but the coming of the Son of man in social life? When there the Son of man shall have come; when in our homes and churches and communities there shall have come forth, out of the turmoil and confusion of our imperfect living, the perfect pattern of humanity, the true social self of man, what shall we see? Ah! there have been, there are now, glimpses of it which are clear enough to let us answer the question. We shall see—when the Son of man, when the perfect man shall have come in our social

life—we shall see such an unselfish and intelligent devotion of each man to the good of each and all as shall make him forget himself, and in his self-forgetfulness shall win for him the best and noblest character; each losing himself in unselfishness to find himself in the unconscious growth of his consecrated manhood, so that, as the result of all, the great self of society and the subordinate selfs of which this great self of society is made up are all complete in mutual ministries,—this is the coming of the Son of man in social life.

In government, in learning, in society, the coming of the Son of man is the standing forth, suddenly or slowly, of the perfect man, from the midst of all the fermentations and corruptions, the mistakes and the delays, the sins and sufferings, of human history.

"A glorious picture!" you say. "The dream of all the ages. The hope of all philanthropic and poetic souls ever since the world began!" But then you hesitate. You turn back to the pages of your Bible with a troubled air. "What has all this to do with Christ?" you say. "I thought He was the Son of man. I thought that some day riding upon the glory of the eastern sunrise or issuing from the splendor of the evening sky, Jesus, the Jesus who went years ago into the heaven which stooped over the Mount of Olives to receive Him, was coming in the clouds of heaven with hosts of angels for His company. This is what I have been looking for, and now you promise me the gradual improvement of mankind. Is it not an awful disappointment? Is not the vision all faded and colorless when you thus

read it down into the platitudes of the platform orator of human progress?"

I know the feeling which such words express. I know how eagerly we cling to the picture of the opened sky, so eagerly that often we are in danger of not thinking what it must mean upon the earth for Christ to come. But the spirit that is in such a protest we must never lose. God forbid that we should ever come to think of human nature as a great system, with its own power of development within itself, just working out its own perfection. God forbid that we should forget for a moment that it is only by touching the fire of God that the fiery life of man can burn. Man is capable of greatness only because he is God's child. Man becomes great only as his childhood to God becomes a living fact. Man and God, child and Father, must meet. They do meet in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, and here is the truth about the matter, the vision which our eyes are looking for in the heavens, and the new improved life which our souls are longing for in the government, the learning, and the social life of the world, belong together. They are not two and different; they are one and the same. I do not know—who does know, and who can know?—what the actual visible phenomenon will be—what glories of the opened heavens, what gathering of the angelic hosts,—but this I am sure of, that there is no perfection of humanity possible which shall not be the entrance into and the occupation of humanity by Jesus Christ, the bringing of the Son of man to be the real spirit and standard of

this earth! When that regenerated life, that perfect humanity in government, in learning, and in life shall come, it will be Christ that comes,—Christ the completion of humanity in its union with divinity, Christ the life of men because Himself the true man,—Christ who came once to show man what man in God was, and who is coming again to make that manhood in God the standard of the world, the only recognized judge and pattern, to which men shall offer their lives for its approval.

Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!—that is the cry of all earnest hearts. Come, and make the perfect man, the divine man, be counted the only true man. The world waits, every good cause lingers, expecting the coming of the Son of man.

3. And so, if we understand at all what is meant by the coming of the Son of man, then we are ready for our third question—What is it to "stand before Him." Must not our answer be, to "stand before the Son of man" is to have such a character, to live such a life, that when His asserted and established dominion comes, those lives and characters shall blend with it, help it, and be helped by it, and not be swept away as something hostile or useless, something which has no further place or right now that the complete condition of the world has come.

Suppose to-day the Son of man should come in government. That meant, as we saw, the recognition and establishment of the true principle of government. Government exists solely for the good of the governed, and its success lies in the expression,

the development, the education to self-government of the men it rules. Let government be set upon that basis, let that great first truth pour in like a flood on all the nations of the earth, and what will be the result? All that is in harmony with that idea will stand before it; all that is in contradiction to it will go down before it. All the inhuman thoughts of government, all conceptions of government as existing for the benefit of the governors, all selfish or corrupt politics must be swept away. They cannot stand. But all true thoughts of government, all unselfish, devoted, human thoughts will blend with this true revelation of what government ought to be. They will say, "This is what we have been guessing at and waiting for." They will gather up their courage and anticipate success. This is the way in which they will "stand before the Son of man."

The same is true of learning. Let the Son of man come in our schools and colleges, and there are some of our scholars who must disappear as dust before the wind; and there are other scholars who will stand before Him and know themselves in Him with a delightful reassuring knowledge. If you have dared to think of knowledge simply as personal luxury, if you have let yourself, the more you knew, be separated all the more from your fellowmen and not be drawn the closer to them, that must be all exposed. All pedantry, all pride of learning must disappear. The selfishness, the baseness of such learning must be swept away. If you have studied morally and humanly, if as a student you

have been ever more and more a man, seeing ever goodness beyond truth, seeing always something for humanity to be as always the purpose of what humanity can know, then, however much you may have gone astray and made mistakes, yet when the Son of man comes and says, " I am the truth. This is life eternal to know me," then you shall stand before Him. The substance of all honest and unselfish thought and study shall ultimately be taken up by the great stream of truth, and shall not perish, but shall live in it forever.

And so of social life. Christ comes to-morrow and regenerates society. Diviner purposes, diviner spirits, fill its life. A purer manhood, a purer womanhood, issues out of its confusion. Every man feels the change. But will not different men feel it differently ? One man says, " It is all over with me now " ; another man lifts up his head and sees close at hand the fulfilment of his dearest hopes. The man who has lived on the degradation of society, what chance is there for him now that society is purified ? Where will his dishonesty, his selfishness, his impurity have any chance ? The coming of the Son of man, the setting up of the standard and promise of the perfect man, has been his ruin. But the earnest, the pure, the souls eager for goodness in themselves and in the world, they are at once awake, alive, and full of hope. Look how they gather round this Son of man and " stand before " Him. See how they come! Each with his poor, pathetic little piece of struggle which has looked so hopeless while he was fighting it out in his

own obscure corner of the world,—see how each comes and sets his bit of solitary struggle deep into the great victory of Christ, and knows that he has his true part in Christ's fulfilment of the human life, the complete establishment of God's idea of man.

I think that there can hardly be any thought of life more encouraging and ennobling than this. A young man labors on alone at some task which he is sure that it is good for him to do. He works in silence; men do not notice him, or if they notice him they despise him. Perhaps a few simple souls love him and praise him, and their love and praise make him seem all the more insignificant and ridiculous in the eyes of the world, whose standards he totally fails to meet. He works on, quiet, patient, cheerful, happy. He can hardly give you a clear account of why he goes on working at his lonely task, but it is almost as if he felt sure that the great spirits of good were with him. He has no word of reproach for misconception or of complaint for hardship. He is perfectly patient, busy, happy. And then some day the world makes a distinct step forward. It turns suddenly a corner which it has been long approaching, and there, advancing down the road towards it, is a new, a higher type of human life. It is a loftier attainment of humanity coming in to occupy the world. It is a coming of the Son of man. And then this quiet worker lifts up his head and a light comes in his eyes, and he calmly goes and takes this stranger by the hand. He goes and "stands before the Son of man," and he is "counted worthy to stand" there. The Son of man

turns and looks at him and knows him, and without a question takes him for his ally and his friend.

Is not our question answered? "To be worthy to stand before the Son of man" is to be living such lives that if a greater day should dawn, a nobler, purer life be opened on the world, a new demand be made on our humanity, we should be ready for it. We may be hoping for it or despairing of it. We may seem even now to hear the footfall of the comer or we may, after a hundred disappointments, have grown desperate and said, "No, He will never come." That does not matter. To be living such lives that if He did come we should go to Him and take our places by His side sure that that was where we belonged, so we are "worthy to stand before the Son of man."

In a deep sense, as it concerns the highest things, every soul is worthy of that of which it is capable. A soul that is capable of being forgiven is worthy of being forgiven. A soul that is capable of going to heaven is worthy of going to heaven. So to be worthy of standing before the Son of man is to be capable of standing before Him; it is to have such a nature, it is to live such a life that when we see Him we shall know that our place is by His side and shall go up to the judgment of His presence without a fear.

Again I find myself wondering whether I do not melt away into abstractions that which the Bible likes to keep in such clear, personal distinctness. We talk about the coming of standards of higher living, of a new and more glorious type of human

life; the Bible talks of the coming of the Son of man. We sigh and cry for purer government, for more spiritual learning, for more unselfish social life; the New Testament with its last verse sends throbbing out through the ages its passionate appeal, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" I would fain hope that our study of this morning has opened somewhat to us the depths of reasonable meaning which are included in that cry to Christ and have enabled us to hear in it all the great cry of humanity for a better life, of which the world is full. But as we close let it become very personal, let it have all the intensity and warmth of personality. A thousand things the poor world wants, but it wants only one Person, only one Saviour. In Him, in Jesus, all that it really needs must come to it. Peace instead of war, unselfishness instead of selfishness, hope instead of fear, holiness instead of wickedness,—all of these must come when Christ comes to be the world's king. And He is surely coming. The world has been given to Him by His Father, and shall certainly be His. Oh, may we be such men that when He comes we may gather up our lives, which have tried to obey Him even when they saw Him very dimly, and go and stand before Him—worthy to stand there because we are able to stand there by His grace. With that readiness in us we can patiently wait His time, for the soul that is ready to welcome Christ and live with Him at His coming has welcomed Him and is living with Him already.

XVIII.

THE JOY OF RELIGION.

"And as for the prophet and the priest and the people that shall say, The burden of the Lord, I will even punish that man and his house. Thus shall ye say every one to his neighbor and every one to his brother, What hath the Lord answered? and What hath the Lord spoken?"—JEREMIAH xxiii. 34 and 35.

THERE must have been a very sad state of things in Jerusalem when Jeremiah the prophet wrote these words. The people were reluctantly religious. They believed in God as Jesus said that the devils believed and trembled. They went to worship Him and to ask His will because they were afraid not to go. They would gladly have stayed away from the temple, and shut all religion out of their houses and their hearts, and been rid of the whole thing if they had dared. They did not dare, and so their religion lay like a heavy cloud upon their city instead of filling its houses and its streets like sunshine. The people, when they talked with one another, called it "The burden of the Lord."

Jeremiah felt how angry God must be with this. He knew that the heart of the Father could not value any such enforced and frightened service of His children. Another picture filled his imagination wholly

different from that which he was seeing every day. He pictured to himself the hosts of people all flocking to Jehovah as their dearest friend. He heard the streets all alive with the questions which the people were asking one another about the last utterance of God. "What hath the Lord answered?" "What hath the Lord said?" he heard them eagerly inquiring of one another. Then he turned back from his dream, and lo! there was nothing in the real Jerusalem except this slavish obedience to a Master whom the people did not dare to disobey. No wonder that the word of the Lord came to him and he spoke. "As for the people and the priest and the people that shall say The burden of the Lord, I will even punish that man and his house. Thus shall ye say every one to his neighbor and every one to his brother, What hath the Lord answered? and What hath the Lord spoken?"

The prophet simply hears issuing from the lips of God such a remonstrance as must come from the heart of any generous friend whose friendship is accepted as a burden and not welcomed as a joy. The father whose son obeys him out of servile fear, the teacher whose lessons are learned in dogged and ungrateful submission, the generous ruler whose subjects hate him, and would rebel against him if they dared,—these all interpret to us the feeling which Jeremiah expresses from the heart of God. How modern it all sounds! How it lets us see that the men in old Jerusalem were like the men to-day. It is modern because it is universal. It belongs to our time because it belongs to all times. Always there

have been men who did not dare not to be religious, but who never got at the heart and soul and glory of religion because their religion never came to be an eager, delighted, impatient seeking for the will and help of God. I think that there can be no presentation of God to us more pathetic, more full of gracious dignity and living majesty, than that which shows Him earnestly remonstrating with His children upon this false and base relation which they take towards Him, which makes it impossible for the richest of His life and help to flow over into them.

Let us try to understand this condition of the people of Jerusalem which is also the condition of so many modern men, this strange phenomenon of reluctant religiousness, this service of God which all the time that it is being done still counts itself a burden.

We begin by recognizing the way in which God has built the world so that the healthy and legitimate exercise of every power ought always to be a source of pleasure to its fortunate possessor. How that law runs through everything! Our imagination seems to feel its presence even in unconscious things. The first poetic instinct thinks it almost hears the pine tree shout upon the hill top with the joy of growing, and catches a sense of satisfaction from the rhythm of the machinery with which the factory beats out the music of its work. When we come up to living things, we do not need the effort of imagination. Everyone can see with what enjoyment the bird flies and the dog hunts. The horse as well as the rider is happy in the rush of healthy action. Even the

lowest creature who floats on the pool's surface or lies and basks in the sunshine feels, we are sure, some dull, half-conscious pleasure in the mere act of living, in the normal activity of each organic function which is the witness of its place in the great universe of God.

When we mount higher still and come to man, then it is still more certain. The test of health in man is that joy follows action. You lift your arm, you draw your breath, you think your thought with pain, and you are instantly aware that something is wrong with you. There is some pebble in the stream of life that jars its current and makes it, in so far, not life but death, not flow and progress but stoppage and interruption. All your associations with your fellow-men, bringing out your powers into action, making you use your capacity of living, trusting, persuading, obeying, helping, and being helped, all of these ought to bring unmixed delight. The same things which we do in these earthly streets often with reluctance and complaint will bring unmixed delight when we do them on the streets of the New Jerusalem. There it will be possible to test the truth and healthiness of every action by its joy. "It hurts me," or "I do not want to do it," will be the soul's testimony that the thing ought not to be done. There will be the safety and the peace of heaven.

"Serene shall be our days and bright,
And happy shall our nature be,
When love is an unerring light,
And joy its own security."

We are very far away from that now. "I know it is my duty because I hate it so," is very apt to be the cynical expression of the condition in which men feel that they are living, but yet it is a noble sign of how our nature cannot fall entirely away from its design and first idea that the human soul always keeps the double sense that it was made for happiness and goodness both, and that when it comes to its completeness it will find them both in harmony, that in the end righteousness and peace shall kiss each other.

It would be very terrible if it were not so, if the intrinsic condition of activity were pain. That would be incredible as a general fact of human life, and it would be incredible also, I think, of any one human power taken by itself. If our experience of man found that there were any capacity of man whose natural exercise, apart from all deranging circumstances, brought distress and misery, how we should stand perplexed and almost dismayed. Plenty of powers there are which, under present conditions, as we are living now, we cannot put into exercise without pain,—we cannot work without weariness, we cannot trust without disappointment, we cannot think without feeling the thought which we send out striking almost immediately on some obstacle which turns it out of the course in which we sent it to find the perfect truth. But all of these we know are accidental pains. To work; to trust, to think, are, in their essence, self-indulgences. The soul seeks them with appetite, seeks them even in spite of the painful experience with which they are

now constantly associated, and so bears witness of its belief that in themselves they are sources of joy and not of suffering.

Let us try to keep such a healthy faith as that. Let us be clear-souled enough to see through and behind the present connection of life and pain, and know that in its essence life is not pain but joy. We are sure that it must be so with God in His complete existence. The omnipotence of God and the bliss of God must belong together. In the infinite range of His power lies the infinite completeness of His joy. He cannot act without happiness any more than the sun can shine without light. It is not only a joy in the result of action, we cannot think of God without believing that there is joy in action itself, that every outgoing of power is answered by an inflowing flood of delight. And what we think must be in God, we believe must be, we find to be potentially in man His child.

And now among the powers of man, lo! there is one highest power which has always been bearing witness of itself, which has always refused to be ignored or denied. Men have tried to deny it and injure it. They have said to it, "Be quiet; you are not a true part of us. You are only a temporary, morbid form of exhibition of some powers of us which are real and which will leave you, their temporary exhibition, behind as they come to their complete life." But still the power of religion, the power in man of counting himself the child of a heavenly Father and of looking up to that Father for commandment and for care, has always answered

back confidently to all such denials of its existence, "Nay, but I am. You know I am, in spite of all your eager saying that I am not." And man, whether he were the savage finding the knowledge of God at the bottom of all things or the sage finding the knowledge of God at the summit and crown of all things, has in the long range of his consciousness owned the existence of this power of being religious among the powers which made up his manhood.

And more than this, he has answered that if this power of religion be in man then it is the greatest of his powers, it is the king among them. This no man will deny. Even he who says that there is no power in man of recognizing, loving, and obeying God will freely say, I think, that, if there were, that power would be the Lord of all man's life, would give man his supreme dignity, and would deserve and ought to have his most careful care.

And now does this religious power also fall under the law of all our powers which I was trying to describe? Our first conviction surely is that it must, simply because it is our highest faculty. "It cannot be," so runs our simplest thought, "It cannot be that all my lower powers are meant and made to give me joy, but this my highest power has no joy to give. It cannot be that I was made so that my thirst should run to the river, and my curiosity to the book, and my friendship to my friend, and yet that my soul should hold back and hesitate when it is offered the chance to go to God. It must be that in my supreme faculty the law of all my faculties will be supremely realized, and that I shall find joy

in loving and obeying God which no other indulgence of my nature ever has attained."

And no one who looks carefully at the history of man can fail to own that in general such enthusiastic expectations have beeen satisfied. Among the enjoyments which have brightened men's lives since men began to suffer and enjoy, the enjoyment which has come to men from an assured belief that they belonged to God, and that He loved them, and that they loved Him, shines with a lustre which is all its own. The happiest moments which have been passed upon this earth have probably been moments in which consecrated human souls have intensely realized their nearness to the soul of God; and the most passionate desire which the world has ever seen has probably been the desire of eager hearts who had tasted of divine communion to come yet nearer to the God to whom they longed to give, in whom they longed to lose their life.

This, I believe, this, I am sure, is true: and yet no doubt the other fact is also true that there have always been Jeremiah's men upon the earth, that multitudes of men have always looked at the knowledge of God and obedience to Him as sad necessities. Men who have called themselves religious have had at the bottom of their hearts a terrible misgiving that they were religious only from fear, and that, if they dared, they would cast all religion to the winds and go their way unhaunted by the spiritual cares. There is surely something very strange in such a combination of phenomena. Surely it may well make us ask whether it is possible to understand

the causes of this reluctance, this shrinking back from that which, when it has its full power, is the strongest passion that can occupy the soul of man. Why is it that to so many men religion is a burden and a toil instead of an inspiration and a joy ? Let me try to give several reasons, all of which have their effect.

The broadest and simplest, perhaps also the most powerful reason, as it seems to me, is that men fail to get hold of the truth that religion is natural to man, and think that it is something strange and foreign. You and I do nothing with the heartiest readiness except what we feel that we were made to do. All other things are either amateur side-issues of our life, or else they are bondages fastened upon us by some outside despotism. The time when he discovers in his nature some strong natural fitness is the moment when a young man's nature wakes to enthusiasm and settles itself down to the determined pursuit, the gradual delighted attainment of some great end in living. Now how is it about the knowledge and obedience of God ? Partly because the human soul needs higher help in order to attain this loftiest ambition, partly because, surrounded by the things of earth, many men seem to satisfy their souls with simple earthliness and so the men who seek for and attain to spiritual life appear to be exceptions,— for these and other reasons religion comes to seem to many souls an importation, something unnatural, something to be sought after and attained only with a struggle. A man comes into a savage island and there settles himself down and begins, let us say, to

paint. The landscape glows upon his canvas. The soul of all this yet uninterpreted nature becomes translated by his brush. The savages gather about him and admire. He seems to them a creature of another kind. His art is something transcendent, unimaginable. And then suppose that some voice speaks to them and says, "All that which you see is not miraculous. It is not superhuman, not extra-human; it is simply human. It is in every one of you to do what that man does,"—how perfectly incredible that would sound. And if the voice went farther and compelled every poor savage to undertake as a duty what it declared to be a possibility, then what complaining there would be. With what reluctant fingers, ashamed of their own clumsiness, those unbelieving savages would take up the brushes which they thought that men like them ought not to touch. Somewhat like that I think it is with many men about all spiritual things. You say to your friend, "See, is not that beautiful, that Christian life? Look, how that servant of the Saviour walks above the world. Behold how, satisfied with Jesus, he can do without the world's indulgences. Behold how, obedient to Jesus, he can resist the world's temptations. Is it not beautiful?" Your friend replies, "Indeed it is!" and stands and admires, as much enraptured as yourself. But when you turn and bid him live that same life, how he recoils. "Oh, not for me!" he says. "I am a weak and common mortal. These extraordinary flights, these high experiences, are not for me." And if you force his conscience to the task the power of this lurking

unbelief infects and poisons every effort that he makes. He cannot because he thinks that he cannot. What does he need? A larger thought of his own life, a deeper knowledge of himself, a broad outlook over uncultivated, unappropriated regions of his own nature, a stir and wakening in him of the knowledge that he is God's son. Let all this come, and with it must come courage and hope; and what a man does with courage and hope he always does with joy.

Another reason why the Christian life and Christian duties are clothed for so many people with the aspect of difficulty and reluctance, instead of being full of invitation and delight, seems to me to lie in this—that the Christian religion, by the necessity of the case, presented itself first to the world as a means of rescue and repair, and that that side of it has almost entirely absorbed men's thoughts of it ever since. The world was full of sin when Jesus came. The world is full of sin to-day. When Jesus came into the world, when Jesus comes to you or me, His first work must be to rebuke our sin and bid us leave it. "Repentance" is the first cry. "He that repenteth and forsaketh his sin, he shall find mercy." Now, that is negative! And that is by necessity full of the spirit of fear! And to do negative work fearfully can never waken the most ardent enthusiasm, or make the pulses leap with the most buoyant joy. To be dragged up out of a pit into which we have fallen, to be plucked away from a fire which seems to be racing on to destroy us, to be forgiven for sin for which we have been expecting to be pun-

ished,—that stirs the profoundest gratitude and fills us with a peace all the more blessed and complete because of the remembered danger and distress with which it stands in contrast. But still all that is negative. The moment that the face is turned away from the dead past, and looks toward the living future, a new power comes. Then all is positive. "Thou shalt not" is swallowed up and lost in the more mighty, the more divine, "Thou shalt." Then the soul feeds on promises. It no longer is contented just to hold its own. Hope is awake, and hope is infinite.

Now, as I said, the first presentation of the Christian Gospel to the world was of necessity as a message of rescue and repair. It was a gospel of forgiveness. The world was old and sick with sin. Christ came as the physician, and had at once to lay His hand upon disease. That need has not yet passed away, can never pass away so long as men are sinners. But it may well be doubted whether the Christian faith has not too narrowly confined itself to this its first necessary presentation. The Gospel has been made too exclusively a Gospel of forgiveness. We are surprised sometimes when we look through the New Testament to see how very much there is positive, not negative at all. Even if man had never sinned, still there might have come to him the great assurance of how vast was the possible range of goodness and strength to which he might attain if he would claim the help of God. Of that assurance the New Testament is full. The forgiveness of sin is but the setting free of the soul that it may realize

that assurance. If a man can hear that assurance, through every promise of forgiveness, deepening it, giving it its fullest purpose, he cannot help but listen. There is an eagerness with which the prisoner listens to catch every word of the pardon which is to set him free. But with a healthier and more earnest eagerness the freed prisoner, outside of the jail gate, hangs on the lips of the wise friend who tells him how he may become a strong, respected man again. And so Christianity becomes a new thing to you when in it you feel the power not merely of forgiveness and escape from penalty, but of a manifold new life, of higher thoughts, braver struggles, nobler society with brother-man, profounder character—in a word, of a whole new life. With all that in expectation think what new zest must come into the faith of Christian men. How men would listen for God's word, and ponder it and try to get at its depths! How they would say every one to his neighbor, and every one to his brother, "What hath the Lord answered?" and "What hath the Lord spoken?"

I want to speak of one more of the causes which rob religion of its joy. It is the superficialness and partialness of our religious life. Very many of the best and greatest things are dull and burdensome upon the surface, and they only lay hold upon us and enchain us when we get within the power of their hearts and souls. The study which is holding its profound student enraptured and sleepless with delight is the same study over which the school-boy yawns and groans. Once, it may be, he who is now the enraptured and delighted scholar was the yawn-

ing school-boy. At that long-gone day when he sat over his hated task, there were two possible ways of relieving his weariness and disgust. He might have cast the dreary study aside altogether and gone out to his play, or he might have pressed on into the heart of his study and found it full of fire and enthusiasm. This last is what he did, and now there is no joy for him like questioning his science for its deepest secrets and delving or waiting till the answer comes.

And here, then, is the man of whom we have been speaking this morning, the man who is reluctantly religious. He does religious duty, he thinks religious thought, but it is weariness to him. "The burden of the Lord," that is the true name for his experience. Is it not the fact that for him also there are two possible ways of escape from the dreariness of a reluctant religion? It is conceivable that he may turn his back upon it all, and give himself up totally to the world as if there were no God, no soul, no heaven, no hell. Or he may press on deep into the knowledge of the eternal and the infinite until he is all absorbed in them, and temporary and finite things lose every value except what they get from the reflections of the infinite and the eternal which appear in them.

You are right in the midst of the clatter of the world. The tumult of society is in your ears. Through it, piercing it as the lightning pierces the stormy sky, there comes some word of God. He tells you that your soul is sacred, that selfishness is death in life, that judgment is coming. You turn away and will not listen. You plunge again into the

strife of tongues. Perhaps you can escape that voice of God; if you can, it is dreadful. If by a blessed incapacity you cannot escape it, then there is only one thing to do—to listen to it, and obey it, to question it, "What hath God answered?" "What hath God spoken?" To open your heart to the living word of God, to be His servant and to do His will.

O my dear friend, if you have tried to be religious and have found your religion a burden, what you need to relieve its burdensomeness is to be not less but more religious. If prayer is a task and a slavery, you must not spring up from your knees and rush back into the open fields of self-reliance; you must press forward into deeper and deeper chambers of God's helpfulness. You must desire greater and greater things, things so great that none but God can give them. So, and so only, can you come by and by to eager prayer, to waiting at the door of grace with deep impatience till the answer comes. If self-sacrifice exhausts and embitters you, the refuge is not in self-indulgence but in more self-sacrifice. If the little amateur work which you do for your Master, done in the leisure moments which are left over after your work for yourself is done, is all unsatisfactory, what you need is a brave giving over of your whole life to Him and the doing of everything for His blessed sake. If the little truth which you believe frets and distresses you, you must send out your wonder and your faith to compass the completest knowledge which a soul like yours can win.

So always, he who goes up to conquer peace and righteousness must burn his ships and trust his whole life to the land which lies so rich before him. Oh, the poor, weary, half-way Christians, who play upon the fringes of the religious life, and are never quite sure that they will not turn back again and leave it all behind ! Some day they must feel the great strength of Christ taking possession of them wholly. Then, totally consecrated to Him, the learning of His truth, the doing of His work, the growth into His image, shall fill and satisfy their souls.

I have not spoken of the baser reasons which make sometimes the struggle for a higher life a burden and a pain to him who undertakes it. If a man is living in sin which he will not give up and yet is trying to keep a hold upon religion, then of course to him it is all weariness and woe. But I have chosen to speak to-day of men of better sort. These causes blight their faith and rob it of its freshness and delight. Their religion is not natural enough. It is not positive enough. It is not thorough enough. When I look in upon the lives of those who in all times have most found their service of Christ a perennial joy, I find in them always these qualities. They have counted their service of Christ the crown and consummation of their humanity. They have sought in it not simply rescue, but attainment. And they have given themselves up without reserve into its power.

It is good to feel deeply that Christ Himself is always urging His disciples on to such a faith in

Him as this. He glorifies our human life until it claims completeness in obedience to the divine. He is not satisfied to forgive any soul without trying to carry it forward to a positive, gradually perfecting life. He demands the whole devotion of the soul He saves.

Therefore whoever comes into the service of Christ at all gets within sight of the supreme religion. Therefore whoever is trying to do Christ's will even in bondage is close upon the borders of the glorious liberty of the children of God. Therefore one wants to cry to every weary and discouraged Christian, "Oh, keep on! keep on, however hard the work appears to be! This is not the real light of faith, but it is close upon its borders. Be obedient. Do the will of God, however bitter it may be, sure that there is sweetness at its heart, and never resting till you have found its sweetness."

When you have found it, then your whole life listens at the lips of God. To hear Him tell His will by any of His wonderful voices is your perpetual desire. Your ears are always open. "What hath He answered?" "What hath He spoken?" you go asking of neighbor and of brother. And to such eager listening as that the word it listens for surely comes. May we so listen for it that it shall come to us!

XIX.

THE PREËMINENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

"Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."—JOHN vi. 68.

IT seems from the Bible story that at one time—and no doubt at many times besides—many of Christ's disciples went back and walked no more with Him. Then Jesus turned to the twelve and said, "Will ye also go away?" And Simon Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." It appears almost as if these impetuous words really showed a novel feeling in the mind of Peter. It seems as if, constantly keeping company with Jesus, it never had occurred to him to think of separation. All of a sudden the retreating crowd and Jesus' question put that thought before him; and then he became aware that Christ had grown to be absolutely necessary to him. He could not live without Him. There was no substitute conceivable, no other that could do for him that which his Lord was doing every day. And this sudden, almost surprised conviction breaks out in the strong words, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

If this be all true, then we are sure that afterwards Peter's firm hold upon Christ must have been firmer than ever. After he had discovered how indispensable his Saviour was, after he had realized that nobody could take that Saviour's place to him, his faith must have had a new assurance in it. That moment's recollection must have made his denial harder and his remorse more bitter and his return more eager. For there is always a sort of assurance of a thing's value which comes from the perception of that thing's indispensableness. When we find that nothing else can do what one power has hopefully undertaken, and are fully convinced that what that power has undertaken is something which must be done, it always strengthens our belief in that power's capacity to do it. Let me pass in this way from the special experience of St. Peter to the law which I wish to apply to religion generally to-day.

If any army learns to believe not merely that its general is brave, but that he is the only man in all the land who can lead them on to victory, they will rally round him all the more enthusiastically. It is one of the strongest arguments for the most permanent and universal human institutions that they have no substitutes. Nothing can take their place. Men grow impatient of government, and they attempt to give it up and try to live in anarchy. Men are dissatisfied with the family and they throw it aside for the community. They stand aside and wait—those two great necessities, the family and government—sure that men cannot do without them. They stand and wait in their quiet dignity, till men too find how

necessary they are and come to them, and bring them back in honor, and recrown and rethrone them and are loyal to them with a new loyalty.

I want to-day to plead this same argument for religion. Is it true that for religion there is no substitute, that there are certain things which men must always hold essential which she can do, and which she only can do? If there are—if we are sure that for eternally necessary works she has no substitute, if all who offer themselves to take her place are evidently insufficient—then we are sure of her, sure that however her throne may seem dishonored,—nay, though sometimes it may seem as if men were ready to banish her out of the world, still and forever she is queen and must come back to a sceptre that none but she can wield. This is no abstract argument about the prospects of religion in the world's future. It comes close to men's experiences. It has helped many of us when the interests of the faith we loved seemed dark. It is capable of giving strength to many a soul whose confidence in religion as a saving power is shaken by some loud, temporary phenomena of irreligiousness. It makes such a soul strong to know that for the power which men seem to despise there is no substitute, that it and it alone can do for man those highest and most precious things which it is inconceivable that man should ever cease to desire.

But we must spend a few moments first in definitions, that we may be sure we know of what we are talking. What is religion, and what is it that religion undertakes to do? I answer to the first question

that religion is the force which inspires man's actions by a love for God in gratitude for what God has done for him. Service of God out of a grateful love of God--that is religion. "We love Him because He first loved us," and "If ye love me, keep my commandments." That is religion. "Ah, yes," you say, perhaps—if you have caught the new talk which is very current nowadays—"yes, that is the Christian religion, that is Christianity, but Christianity is not the only religion. Religion is larger than Christianity." There may be a religion without a Christ, —nay, some people are beginning to say—a little bewilderingly—there may be a religion without a God; yet still I claim that in these two great Christian utterances we have the fundamental truth of what religion is. I own in full the spiritual power which there is in every attempt of heathenism after God, but though there be other religions than the Christian, surely the full notion of religion is not to be gathered out of their imperfection, but out of the more perfect faith which does what they try to do and is what they try to be. If a man asks me what a tree is, I will not send him to a stunted, frost-bitten bush high up Mount Washington, but to the oak or elm which under the best conditions has opened the tree life into fullest glory. If any one asks me what a man is, I will not show him a Kaffir or a Hottentot, but the best specimen of manhood which Europe or America can bring. And yet the mountain shrub is certainly a tree, and the Hottentot is certainly a man. So if anybody asks me what religion is, I will not point to Mohammedanism nor

to Buddhism, though they surely are religions; I will go to Christianity and in its central motive take out the real central force of all religion. Christianity sets men to trying to do God's will because of the Redemption which God in Christ gave them from the Cross. Religion is the service of God out of grateful love for what God has done for us.

And now what does this religious motive try to do? Again, there cannot be a doubt about the answer. The effort of religion is to perfect the man, to bring this rich and manifold life of man's in every part of it out to its perfectness. There cannot be a doubt but that that is her mission as she comes down with her great, new, strong force. When I speak of religion, as I said just now, I speak of Christianity. Christianity comes to you—a man with great, strong powers, with a great, strong nature, half-awakened, working away vehemently in some parts of it, torpid and dead, entirely unconscious of itself in other parts of it—the religion of Christ comes to you and says, "See, what I have to show you!" It holds up the Cross and says, "God loved you so that He did that for you to save you from your sins and bring you back to Himself. See how He plans for you. See how He suffers for you. See how He loves you. Now, to thank Him and to show Him that you love Him in answer, do His will. Here is all righteousness, all goodness; be and do all this!" What is Christianity aiming at when it does that? You say, the forgiveness of your sins. No, the forgiveness of your sins is not her end; it is only her beginning. She would give nothing to have

you forgiven and cleansed, if you still remained unchanged and undeveloped. You say it is to get you into heaven,—talking about heaven as if it were a place beyond the stars. But no, religion is not set upon places, she is not busied with the mere geography of the universe. She would not care for you in heaven if you were still in heaven what you are here upon the earth, all open and active upon the sensual side of you, all closed and dead upon the spiritual side. No, there is only one thing worthy of this power of religion to attempt, and that is the thorough perfection of your soul. With a serene ambition she sets her eye upon that. She sees you—you a man or woman engaged here in common worldly things called by a common worldly name, putting out the exertion of a few of the simplest, perhaps the lowest powers,—she sees you holding within yourself all the time immense capacities, untouched powers, springs all wrapped up tight, clinging with the rust that is upon their unused coils, passions, desires, hopes, fears, capacities of loving, doing, suffering—all these this eye of Christianity sees waiting inside of your life and character. Can you conceive of Michael Angelo waiting outside a house in which were paints and brushes and great walls to paint on, gazing into the window and saying, "If I were only in there I would make a picture." So Christianity looks in on your nature and says, "If I were only in there I would make a man. I would bring that being to his perfection. I would make him come up to and fill out his very best, spiritually, intellectually—yea, physically—if I could take pos-

session of him and set him to loving God because God first loved him." This is her one object. She will sacrifice everything to this. She will make the man suffer very often, but she will fulfil his life; she will make him perfect, make him like God by bringing him into God's kingdom.

That is the end at which religion aims. Is such an end desirable? To ask the question is to answer it, I think. I take it for the sign of a lofty and intelligent man, indeed of a real and true and healthy man, that he is dissatisfied and anxious if he sees anything falling short of its complete self, of the best that it might be, whether it be a state or a plant, a statue or a character. Everything desires and seeks its highest. A true man is conscious of pain when he sees anything miss its highest. Most of all when that thing is man, the being capable of the best perfection, the being for whose perfection everything else is laboring. We must reconstruct our thoughts of the purposes of everything in the world before the perfection of human character, the making of the perfect man can cease to seem the aim of all things, "the consummation most devoutly to be wished" of all of which we can conceive. One often wonders how it seems to many of the men who love and honor their humanity and yet who seem willing to see religion pass away as a power among men, whether sometimes there does not come a misgiving and a fear, lest if it went, there should be some parts of this humanity of ours which would no longer find any true culture, and so the hope and prospect of the perfect man be lost forever.

This, then, is the power of religion. The religious man is he who does right because it is the will of a God to whom he owes so much that all which he can render in return is but a mere acknowledgment, not a repayment of the blessing for which he is thankful. Here is a force of life that knows no limit short of the infinite limit of what God has done for man. It never can exhaust itself till man has paid back the unpayable debt of God's salvation. It reaches every part of his nature and tries to conform it perfectly to the will of God,—an endless spiritual force attempting the vast spiritual task. Let me see this spiritual force at work and I know just what is going on. I see a religious man, and how clear it is! Here is a man who knows that God loves him That has been made clear to him with all the emphasis of the suffering of Christ. He is thoroughly grateful for that love. His gratitude is at the root of every act he does. And in that life of service, out of gratitude the fulness of his character, the completeness of his humanity, is being gradually accomplished.

Now take the question with which we started. This is what religion tries to do. This is the sort of life that religion as a force and rule of life creates. And now is there any other force beside religion which can make for a man such a life as shall bring him completely to his best? Is there any substitute for religion? Can any other motive power besides gratitude to God thoroughly regulate the life and perfect the character?

As I look around among men I find really two

attempted substitutes for religion. When men have got to be more than brutes, when they have learned that their passions must be restrained and that they must have some regulating power of their lives, I seem to see two forces or impulses which to many men appear to be quite enough, even without a grateful, humble love of God, to do the work of life with. One of these forces is expediency and the other is honor. These are the two forces that men try to put in the place of religion. Let us look at them a moment and see if they are fit to do her work.

1. Look first at expediency as a motive of good living and a means of human development. We all know how frequently it appears and what power it very often has. We are told that a good life is the best life, the safest and the happiest. "If you do what is wrong, no matter what may be the present pleasure of it, you certainly will suffer. If you do what is right, no matter how hard the struggle to which it sets you now, you certainly will prosper. Therefore, it is not well, it is not prudent, it is not expedient to be wicked." The doctrine is immensely true. Its certainty is emphasized by all that we already know of human history, and misgivings of still more terrible assertions of it stretch forward into the other world. And the doctrine certainly is lofty, inasmuch as it asserts that right and wrong are not mere whims and fashions, but essential and eternal things, that they have to do with the very structure of man and of the world, that both man and the world are built so that the wrong finds its pun-

ishment and the right its reward. And certainly it is a doctrine which does to a very great extent control the actions of mankind. Some people will even call it religion. Some people will make religion to be nothing but a great system of expediency stretching out into the world beyond the grave. But I hope that you have seen how clearly this is not religion. The religious man says, "This is right, and I will do it because God wants me to and I love Him for the great love wherewith he has loved me." The prudent man says, "This is right, and I will do it because it will be best for me." They are two different things. The first is religious and the second is not religious, only prudent.

And now what are the faults of this system of expediency? How does it fail when it tries to put itself into the place of religion as a sufficient force to guide the lives and perfect the characters of men? You have seen already how tame and dull it sounds beside the strong motive which it tries to supplant, how utterly it lacks the enthusiasm of which the other is full. But the essential objections to it are two. One that it is limited in its range. The other that it is selfish and low in its spirit. It is limited in its range. If the reason why I will not do what is wrong is that I shall suffer for it, will there not be a tendency for the duty of resistance to concentrate itself upon those acts whose evil consequences are most manifest and certain? I shall be anxious not to do that which I know will instantly bring its vengeance, and I shall be eager to do that which I know will immediately bless me with its reward.

Can we not see it so? The prudent moralist, the moralist whose motive power is prudence, will not do the acts of wanton dissipation which will tell to-morrow or a few years hence in tottering footsteps and a bewildered brain; but the duties of spiritual culture, of chivalrous self-denial for the sake of others, of humility, of self-surrender—although they certainly will bear their fruits far off under the warmer skies and in the richer soil of eternity—by their very remoteness lose their hold upon him. The notion of duty grows narrow and confined and fastens itself on those tasks which lie in the most restricted range and manifest their consequences.

And certainly the spirit of duty done from the mere motive of expediency must be borne down by selfishness, and so the power of such duty to elevate and cultivate the character must be defective. I look at the man who through a long life has done what is right, because he felt satisfied that each right act would help him and advance him, who has resisted many and many a temptation to do wrong because he knew that he would suffer if he did it; I see the path his feet have walked from the beginning to the end of life. It is wonderfully straight; it has escaped disgraces in a wonderful degree. The pit-falls of temptation it has left on either hand. It is a path to point young men to, that they may see how straight a conduct-line may run. But the man who has walked it and who at the end of it is taking the competence and the reputation that his upright life has won him—has he attained to the full richness of a human character? A lofty selfishness, but still

a selfishness, has been behind it all. If you suddenly bring him another duty which involves apparent entire self-surrender, is he ready for it ? Is not the very presence of self-consciousness at all a hindrance ? Are there not parts of the nature whose wild and extravagant action you often see and are often tempted to admire in very bad men—parts of the nature which are evidently essential to it and capable of very lofty and pure exercise—which do not show themselves at all in him ?—capacities of self-forgetfulness and generosity and uncalculating devotion ?

Christianity is beyond all doubt the most expedient thing. But no man can take the service of Christ for its expediency. Unless we lift it to a height which carries it beyond itself, unless we make selfishness so high that it covets for itself the mere pure satisfying pleasure of giving itself away in gratitude to Christ, the power of selfish expediency fails. It does not perfect the character. Nothing but complete devotion out of earnest love can do that; and such a devotion to God is religion.

2. But turn now to the other power which men attempt to substitute for religion as the ruler and inspirer of life. I called it honor. It is that feeling which is in the heart of almost every man, the sense of self-respect which makes him say, " It is beneath my dignity to do a mean or wicked action." Poor indeed is the man who does not know what that feeling is. You offer a man a temptation to steal. He turns away and will not steal because he is loyal to his master, God. That is religion. He draws back and will not steal because he knows that

"Honor is the best policy," that is expediency. He turns indignantly upon you and says, "Do you take me for a thief?" That is honor. What this great instinct of honor has done, it is hard to overvalue. It has been the overruling power of whole sections of society, almost of whole periods of history. It has shone with splendid lustre in the eyes of many men, till it seemed to them all that humanity needed for its full consummation. It has had its martyrs who have given up their lives under its inspiration. It is romantic. It is the power of chivalry. There is hardly an age of history so dark that it may not be found burning there. It is a strong and, as it seems to many people, a sufficient power here to-day. There are many who would substitute the principle of honor for the principle of religion, many who think that the self-respect of the gentleman is enough without the loving consecration of the servant of God.

But what is this honor that shines so splendidly? Is it conscience quickened and filled with pride? Its very principle of life is pride. It is a man's supreme consciousness of his own value, so strong that he recognizes the obligations which rest upon one so valuable as he is. His nobility obliges him. The deficiencies of it seem to be premised in this very definition, and they show out all through the history of its influence on men.

(1.) It is partial in the duties it selects. It is ready to inspire men for those tasks which ordinarily feed men's pride. It can make them resent injuries or refuse to be guilty of a meanness, but it is rare

that honor grows so deep and fine that it will make a man forgive an injury or submit with meekness to a slight. Honor can manage pretty well with the second table of the commandments, but it can do really nothing with the Beatitudes.

(2.) Again the principle of honor has not stability enough. It has no fixity of standards. It is apt to take the fleeting fashions of the hour for its rule of right. It grows fantastic and unsound. We cannot ever forget that for ages the great achievement of the principle of honor was the brutal and unreasonable practice of the duel.

(3.) And again, it brings no spiritual elevation. Pride is always a source of weakness and degradation. It has no power of benefit to character. In humility only does the soul lie open and take in spiritual life.

(4.) And again, the power of honor, of mere personal dignity, is not universal. It belongs only to certain men and certain moods. It never has been, and it is hard to believe that it can be, the inspiration of all men at all times.

(5.) And yet once more, it is cold,—bright, but not warm. It does not fire the soul in which it dwells, and call out all its best activities. Its martyrs do not kindle the world with their stake-fires. One faithful saint has more enkindling power than a whole generation of mere self-respecting gentlemen.

All these defects the principle of honor has with all its great nobility. We would not for a moment pray that it may fail or die away. It is immensely higher than the power of expediency. Indeed it

trembles often on the brink of being something greater than itself. It is often almost religious. But always there is this clear difference: The man of honor is proud; the man of religion is humble. The man of honor respects himself. He thinks of a certain dignity settled in his being the man he is. The man of religion no less respects himself, but it is a self-respect that is wholly consistent with humility,—nay, it is a self-respect that has its root deep down in his humility. He values himself not for the greatness that he finds in his own nature, for he has found in his own nature weakness and sin. He has brought that nature, ashamed of it, to God. It is because God has taken it up and done for it wonderful things, that he sees it now lustrous with the value that the Cross has given to it, and worthy of being dedicated to Him in whose service it can find perfection. That is the self-respect of the Christian —the humble reverence in which the servant of the Saviour holds the soul for which the Saviour lived and died.

These, then, are the two substitutes which men are trying to put in the place of religion and compel to do its work. I have dwelt upon them long; I have taken up almost all this morning's sermon with their description, because they are not mere figments of the preacher's brain. They are real things. They are the things which many of you who listen to me are trying to put into your lives in the motive place, where religion ought to be. I do not speak to those who are mere slaves of passion. I have preached to those in whose hearts there were real

desires to do right. Why do you wish it? Is it expediency? Is it honor? They are the forces of many of the struggles, the real hard struggles with sin, out of which you, my friends and people, come here Sunday after Sunday, to which you return after our service together here is over. I know how far these forces will carry you,—to respectability, to rectitude in every dealing, so that men shall honor you while you live and praise you when you die. But I know there comes a point beyond which they cannot carry you. They never can renew your life and character. By them you never can be born again. They never can set you on the broad ground of enthusiastic duty stretching out into eternity. They have good words to say to you about this life, about the regulation of your daily behavior, but the disciple of religion hears in them no words of eternal life, no programme of existence embracing infinity, full at once of peace and inspiration, such as he finds in the service of his beloved Lord.

This is the reason why every prudent and honorable man here needs to be religious. I bid you ask yourselves, are these things substitutes for the power of grateful consecration to God? Can they do the work for a man which that can do? You are a young business man; all life lies out before you; what will you do there? You will do right, because so only can you prosper, because it is unworthy of you to do wrong. Ah, there will come a time when to do what is right will demand of you to tread your evident prosperity and advantage under your feet. There will come times when every standard of dig-

nity and honor about you will bid you do some brilliant act which you know is wrong. Worse than that, there will come times—times of failure, of bereavement, of sorrow, of despair, almost—when you will seem to have gone quite out beyond these powers; their strength will seem to be exhausted. In some great hour of pain you will not seem to care whether you prosper or not, and your own dignity and honor will be crushed and scattered as the jewels are scattered when a sword crashes through a soldier's helmet to his very brain. In those days what will you do? Then you must have some "words of eternal life." Then nothing but religion can hold you. Then will not the words you need be just these everlasting words of Jesus, "If any man love me let him follow me, and where I am, there shall also my servant be,—in my peace, my confidence, my love."

O my dear friends, there is no substitute! The peace, the hope, the quiet confidence, the humility, the new manhood, cannot come except by religion, cannot come except by Christ. "Who are these in white raiment," the thoroughly white raiment of a new eternal life? Only "those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Only those, that is, the motive of whose new life is the grateful love of their Redeemer. "He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him who died for them and rose again"; for all, that all might live to Him,—for you and me, that you and I might live to Him, and so come to our own best life and enter into His glory.

XX.

THE MITIGATION OF THEOLOGY.

"And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city I will spread abroad my hands unto the Lord; and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail, that thou mayest know how that the earth is the Lord's. But as for thee and thy servants I know that ye will not yet fear the Lord God."—EXODUS ix. 29 and 30.

MOSES, the deliverer of the Jews, was talking with Pharaoh their oppressor, the King of the Egyptians. Again and again the servant of God had demanded of the monarch that he should let God's people go; again and again as the monarch scornfully refused, God's punishments had come, the terrible quick blows of seven of the plagues. In the midst of all the dreadful discipline, there Pharaoh had stood with the captive people held tight in his relentless fists. The more God's blows beat that closed hand, the more obstinate it seemed to grow. At last the proud king cries for mercy and declares what terms he will make with God. Let God change His whole treatment, let Him spare instead of punishing, let Him lift off His heavy hand, and Pharaoh will yield. "Entreat the Lord (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail, and I will let you go." And then comes Moses'

answer, which I read,—God will change His treatment of you; God will take off His hand; "The thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail." But that change in Him will not bring the change in you that you desire. The milder method will not bring of itself what the severer method failed to bring. The method shall be changed if only to show that God has many methods and will use them all, "that thou mayest know that the earth is the Lord's. But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the Lord." No change of treatment of itself can bring a change of heart. Let the heart be right and any treatment of God can interpret Him to His child.

The future proved that Moses spoke the truth. "The heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go." That was most natural. Indeed the whole story is full of human nature, so full that it is really a parable of what is happening all the time. It is this value of it which I want to use this morning. I want to make it my text while I try to point out the danger of the newest religious life of our own time. If I am not mistaken, this story of Pharaoh and especially these words which Moses speaks to him, contain the truth which they are much in danger of forgetting, and in much need of remembering, who rejoice most loudly in those changed aspects of the Christian faith which belong to these present days.

The general character of the change which has taken and is taking place in Christian faith is plain. Under many forms as it applies itself to many

special doctrines it is one in spirit. It is a desire to escape from the severer, stricter, more formal, more exacting statements of truth and duty, and to lay hold of the gentler, more gracious, more spiritual, more indulgent representations of God and of what He asks of man. I shall have occasion to say before long how deeply I sympathize with this great change in the aspect of faith, how truly I believe that in it there is prophesied a new and richer coming of the kingdom of the Lord of love and life. But now at first I ask you only to note the fact, which no thoughtful and observant man can fail to see, and then to observe how many men among us, how we all perhaps sometimes, are led on to attribute a power to such a change in men's thoughts of God and of His ways which no mere change of thought, however it may be from the less to the more true, ever can possess. We glory in the fuller spirit of the New Testament which pervades our religion. The stern judge of the older dispensation is lost behind the gracious and merciful presence of the Christ. Pity is more than judgment, sympathy more than authority, persuasion more than rebuke, in the God of whom men are thinking, of whom men are preaching now. As we talk thus it sometimes seems to us as if the work of religion for the world and for us would be accomplished when these new and glorious ideas shall have become supreme and universal. Sin will be conquered, man will be saved, when the old, severe theology shall be entirely dethroned and men hear everywhere the truth of truths, that "God is love." At such a time it

seems to me that some one ought to speak the very words that Moses spoke to Pharaoh, " The thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail. But as for thee and thy servants I know that ye will not yet fear the Lord God." The mercy, the pity, the tenderness, the long-suffering, the humanness of God—these shall be shown to man as man has never seen them, but be sure that not these aspects of God nor any others of themselves, not this theology nor any other of itself, can make men good, can turn men from their sins, can do away with the fundamental necessities of personal struggle, personal consecration, personal holiness in human lives. It seems to me that men are very much in danger now of attributing to a liberal and spiritual theology that same impossible virtue which men in other times attributed to a hard and formal theology,—a virtue which really no theology can possess, the virtue of itself to make men good and strong and pure. Against that danger I want to warn you and myself. To many an ardent, many a noisy champion of the love of God as against His sternness and His wrath, it seems as if God must be sadly saying, " Yes, I will show you all my love. But yet I know that you will not fear me."

One striking illustration of what I am saying meets us very often. Constantly in New England, which a generation ago was full of the sternest teachings, I hear the lamentations of men who were brought up under the Puritan theology. I have grown familiar to weariness with the self-excuse of men who say, " Oh, if I had not had the terrors of

the Lord so preached to me when I was a boy, if I had not been so confronted with the woes of hell and the awfulness of the judgment day, I should be religious to-day, I should have been religious long ago." My friends, I think I never hear a meaner or a falser speech than that. Men may believe it when they say it—I suppose they do—but it is not true. It is unmanly, I think. It is throwing on their teaching and their teachers, or their fathers and their mothers, the fault which belongs to their own neglect, because they never have taken up the earnest fight with sin and sought through every obstacle for truth and God. It has the essential vice of dogmatism about it, for it claims that a different view of God would have done for them that which no view of God can do, that which must be done, under any system, any teaching, by humility and penitence and struggle and self-sacrifice. Without these no teaching saves the soul. With these, under any teaching, the soul must find its Father.

Again I say that I believe the new is better than the old. The new theology in all its great general characteristics I love with all my heart; I rejoice to preach it as Moses must have felt his heart fill with joy as he went forth to pray for the calm sky and the stilled thunder. But just because I love it and believe in it, I want to say most earnestly that there is no essential power in it to release man from the hard and inexorable necessities and duties by which alone man treads his unbelief and sin under his feet and comes to God.

I hold, then, this, that the change which so de-

lights man's imagination and kindles his ambition, the change from the arbitrary to the essential, from the awful to the gentle, from the narrow to the broad, from the formal to the spiritual, is always a change from the easy to the hard, and not, as men are always choosing to think it, from the hard to the easy. It is so everywhere. In government, the old method of despotism breaks open and the new life of popular freedom comes forth. Men shout as if the race were saved. Now all men will be happy! Now all men will be good! What are we finding? Alas for him whom any dangers that proceed from liberty would drive to think for one base moment of shutting back the tide of freedom behind the hard barriers of personal authority again! His folly is only made harmless by its hopelessness. But alas also for the nation or the citizen which does not learn that to live in freedom is harder than to live as a slave, that liberty of itself makes no people and no man prosperous or good, that self-restraint and honesty and generosity and independence, if they are the crown upon the head of a benignant despotism, are the very life-blood in the veins of a self-governing republic. Or think of education. We used to dictate arbitrary schemes of study to our college students and to what we chose to call our educated men; now we throw open the whole field of learning and say to the studying man, ay, even to the sophomore in our colleges, "Go study what you will, and if you learn it we will call you learned." Is the student's task easier or harder than it used to be? Alas for him who thinks it easier, who thinks that

the license to be learned where he will has any way annulled the everlasting law that knowledge only comes by toil! Happy for him who sees at once that the new liberty demands of him severer self-control and a more conscientious just because a freer work! The methods of dictation and despotism attempted less but they were more likely to do what they attempted than the free selection and the personal self-government are to attain their higher ends. Where the boy turns into the man, where the drudge turns into the scholar, where the slave steps forth to liberty, where the Eden of guarded virtue opens into the world of self-deciding moral life, there always the easy changes to the hard, there always the wise soul hears anew the old words of God, "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee," and "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread."

But let us come more directly to our subject. The change of which I spoke in the character of religious faith shows everywhere, and I want to follow it into some of its special manifestations. So we shall best perceive the danger which I said belongs to it. In the first place, then, it involves a change in the whole conception of the religious motive. What is it that religiously makes men good and keeps them from being bad? It used to be, no doubt, the fear of the punishment that God would send them if they sinned. It is becoming more and more the perception of what a high life is set before the soul if it does right, and the sight of God's love which a loving soul dreads to offend. From fear

to love! Not that the change is absolute, not that there ever was a Christian faith which was not all pervaded with the power of love, not that there ever can be a true faith in God so loving that it shall not be solemnized by fear, but as the prominent, the conscious, the recognized and trusted power, it is the love of God and not the fear of God that fills the eye of worshipping manhood more and more. This outbreak of protest against the dreadful doctrine of endless punishment is really nothing but an utterance of the profound conviction that not by threats of punishment, however awful and however true, but by the promises of love, are men to be brought into the best obedience to God.

The change which the dethronement of that dogma and all the terrible theology which belonged to it has brought, is so radical that we cannot fully comprehend or state it, but it fills us with joy. It has made religion a new thing for multitudes of souls. It has swept the heavy cloud away and let the sunlight into many a life. It has brought fertility to many a desert. And the thanksgivings of men and women who have found that their religion may be just the love of God because He has loved them, and that in that pure love lies their salvation, make the song and glory of these new years of God. No wonder if amid such joy the danger comes, no wonder if there are men who, thinking they have discovered that there is no hell, seem thereby to have secured their place in heaven, as if to be in heaven were nothing greater and better than to be out of hell. No wonder that one hesitates, even

when he believes the truth with all his heart, to go to certain men and declare what he believes, because he knows that it will seem to them as if at once the old need of struggle, the old criticalness of living were gone with the old fear of hell; as if some easy way of holiness had been flung open instead of the straight and narrow way that always has led, that always must lead, to everlasting life. But surely if anywhere our principle is true that the change from the less to the greater is a change not from the hard to the easy, but from the easy to the hard, it is true here. Suppose I am a true believer in the old idea of government by terror. Let it stand to me in its blankest form,—I am trying not to sin because if I do sin I shall go to everlasting torment. Under that fear I study all the law and try to keep it all; I pray, I watch; I give myself no rest; never for a moment is the hand that presses down on me relaxed; never for a moment are those blazing commandments lost from before my eyes. I am afraid to disobey. No doubt the obedience that comes is hard, and narrow, formal, and superficial, but an obedience does come. What such a fear can do it does. But let the liberation dawn. Let the larger faith of love take me into its power. Let me begin to serve God, not for His terror but for His dearness. A larger, nobler, sweeter life at once! The sky is broader and the world is bigger! But oh! the new exactingness of this new service. Oh! the way in which the deep affections, all unstirred before, begin to hear the call of duty. Now they must waken. Not the hands only, now the very heart

must obey. As much deeper as this new love lies below that old terror, so much deeper must the new watchfulness and scrupulousness go below the old. Not now to escape from pain, but to be worthy of this divine love the soul aspires. Its dangers become far more subtle and at the same time far more dangerous. A finer spiritual machinery must respond to this finer and more spiritual power; and struggle comes to mean for the soul something so much more intense that it seems as if all that it had before called struggle were the most placid calm.

My dear friend, unless this is its effect in us our milder conception of God's present and future dealing with the souls of men, however true it may be in itself, is a curse to us and not a blessing. Unless it does this for us we are making the truth of God have the power of a lie. We ought to be afraid of any theology which tampers with the sacredness of duty and the awfulness of life. I would far rather be a believer in the most material notions of eternal penalty and get out of that belief the hard and frightened solemnity and scrupulousness which it has to give, than to hold all the sweet broad truth to which God is now leading us and have it make life seem a playtime and the world a game. No! What one wants to plead with every soul whom he sees going, whom perhaps he himself is trying to lead into the new motive of love, away from the old motive of fear, is this: Remember that you are going where duty will grow not less but more imperious. Remember that watchfulness, obedience, righteousness, will mean far more deep and sacred things to

you there than they have meant before. Go there expecting life and salvation to become a thousandfold more solemn. Go there expecting sin to be vastly more dreadful. O you who glory in your new faith, see what it asks of you! See what you must be to be worthy of it! See what a deeper vigilance, what a more utter consecration, there must be in this new soul to which it has been shown that he is to be saved not by the fear but by the love of God!

I turn to another somewhat different development of the freer—what some, no doubt, will call the looser—religious thinking which pervades our time, that which concerns the whole matter of belief in doctrine. Orthodoxy used to mean the intelligent and convinced reception of a large number of clearly defined propositions about God and Christ and man. Orthodoxy now, for many men, has come to mean a sympathetic entrance into the spirit and genius of Christianity, and especially a cordial personal loyalty to Jesus. I know that here there is a true and great advance. I know the man who seeks to understand his Saviour is nearer to the New Testament than the man who merely learns his creed? In all those sacred pages the idea of doctrinal orthodoxy is very vague. In the Gospels it hardly shows at all. The idea of personal sympathy and personal loyalty is everything. "Whom say ye that I am?" that is the ceaseless question. And so I know that a man has come nearer to the mind of Christ when he thinks that his work in life is to enter into the genius of Christian truth and to be the friend and disciple

of Jesus, rather than to satisfy himself of the truth of many inferential propositions drawn from what Christ and his apostles said. But here, again, the believer in this new and better method is all wrong if he thinks that it opens to him an easier or less exacting spiritual experience than that in which he used to live when he was the champion of doctrines and of creeds. It needs a greater man to be a Christian in the spirit than in the letter of the faith. He who undertakes it must be prepared for deeper mental experiences, for doubts beside which the old doubts shall seem child's play, for a complete obedience of which he never dreamed till he began to seek not only the truth of Christ but Christ the truth. For all experience tells us that a man may pretty easily believe any statement of truth which he wants to believe. Intent, exclusive fixing of the mind upon it will almost certainly make it seem true. But how much more than that is needed when I have to enter into the soul of a great system of salvation like Christianity, or to make myself the disciple, with a discipleship that shall renew me into the likeness of a spiritual Lord like Christ. What repression of myself, what independence of my fellow-men, what opening of the inmost secret places of my life to Him! I know that I could convince a man that a certain theory of the atonement was true, that what Christ did for man upon the Cross was just exactly this or this, with far less strain upon His spiritual power, with far less calling out of his profoundest faith, than I should need in order to make him know the mystery of the Christhood in which

our dear Lord not merely wrought but was the perfect atonement for our sins. One would need a persuaded mind ; the other needs a quickened soul, alive with all the same purposes that filled the soul of Jesus.

Therefore it is, I say, that the new faith demands a larger man and a profounder belief than that which went before. Oh, do not think that because men no longer dare to ask you whether you believe this or that doctrine and to decide whether or not you are a Christian by your answer, that therefore belief has grown a slight and easy thing. As their poor questions fade and die away, all the more deep and awful in the soul's ear grows the profounder question of the Lord Himself which they used to silence, " What think ye of me ? " " Whom say ye that I am ? " Be sure that if you are to be a worthy man of the new faith, a worthy Christian of the new time, your heart must be strong to a more heroic capacity of believing what men call impossible. Your thread of unbelief in the new sight you have of its spiritual essence must be far more deep, and your closet must witness far more earnest pleadings with the God of faith than any that the old days of dogmatism ever saw.

3. I take another illustration from the field of man's relation to his fellow-man in spiritual things. It was a great advance when gradually the idea of spiritual directorship narrowed its range before the progress of the idea of personal responsibility. Once the whole Christian world teemed with confessionals. Certain chosen souls sat by the highways of all life,

often with the tenderest solicitude, often too with wondrous skill and experience, all purified and made the more acute by wondrous sympathy, to tell all their puzzled brethren how to unsnarl their skeins of tangled life, what was their duty, in which way they ought to go. It belonged to all kinds of churches of every creed, of every name. That day is past over a very large proportion of the Christian world. Wherever it has passed it never can come back again. Here and there some men who dread the dangers of the new life for their brethren are dragging out the long-overthrown confessional from the rubbish of the ages under which it lies and trying to set its shattered and unsteady framework in its place again; or else they go and borrow one from that part of the Christian world which has not yet disowned its use. Here and there some puzzled soul cries out for it and begs the Church to take a power which her Lord never gave her, and tell it just how it shall sail its most bewildered life. These are anachronisms and exceptions. The world in which we live, the world of progress, the modern world, the modern man wants no confessional and asks the Church to give him not minute rules of duty, but great inspirations and broad principles of life. For the application of those principles, for the special life he ought to live from day to day, from hour to hour, he appeals to his own conscience. Is the modern man right? Indeed he is! The life that he alone must carry up to God at last, he alone must carry through this world of temptation now. He is doing a noble act, an act to which his manhood

binds him and in which his manhood is asserted when he goes up to the church, or to the priest, and says, "Give me my life, for I must live it. Help me, advise me, inspire me all you can, but give me my life for I must live it." Only, it is of infinite importance into what sort of hands he takes that life of his, whether into hands trembling with anxiety or into hands greedy and coarse with pride. I think that to the best souls of our time there is, with all the exhilaration that comes of the sense of freedom, a pathos that is almost sad about this new consciousness of personal independence, which no man can disown, with which the light souls play as children might play with battle flags, but in which lies unfolded a possibility of tragedy which no man has begun to fathom. The best souls seem to come to life as the morning comes to the world, all flushed and bright with hope, but pausing, lingering, creeping up the sky as if the day's work it saw before it was too great. Oh, how much easier to find my priest and have him tell me what I ought to do than to seek it and find it for myself in all this maze of doubt, hidden under all this heap of passion, prejudice, and pride! Certainly no man is worthy to live in these new days, and be a modern man in the pure church where no spiritual directorship is tolerated, who dares to be frivolous, who is not constantly and almost overwhelmingly, aware that to guide one's own life is not and cannot be an easy thing, who is not made all the more humbly dependent upon God by the independence of his fellow-men which his soul steadfastly claims.

It would be interesting, if we had time, to trace the clear illustration of our truth in relation to the institutions of religion and the use that men make of them. There, too, a freer method reigns. There, too, the freer method is an advance upon the stricter method just in proportion as it secures more fully the purposes for which the institutions all exist. For instance, there is a less constrained observance of Sunday. There are larger notions of what constitutes the sacredness of the Day of Rest. Is it a gain or a loss, this departure from the severer rules in which we lived some twenty years ago? As Christians we can give but one answer: It is a gain so far as it makes a more reasonable, a more voluntary, a brighter and freer religion possible. If it does that, because it does that, we are glad of the new spirit that fills the Lord's Day. We rejoice that its distinct difference from the Jewish Sabbath has been distinctly shown, because thereby the chance is opened for us to gain perfectly out of our Lord's Day what the Jew could only gain most imperfectly by his most scrupulous Sabbatical propriety. The larger liberty of Sunday is beautiful to us because it means not the throwing away, but the true keeping of the Lord's Day by the man for whom it was made. There is a Sunday conceivable on which no Hebrew shadow rests, a Sunday full of spontaneousness and delight, a Sunday when the soul honors its Lord not merely by turning aside to some fenced and protected regions of its life where alone it seems to it that He abides, but when it touches the familiar things of the other days with

new hands and looks on them with new enlightened eyes, and finds them sacred and full of light,—a Sunday whose proper occupations are broadly and freely dictated by the soul's own consciousness of spiritual needs, a Sunday when men shut their shops not by a law of the State but by the law of God in their hearts, His everlasting law that the life is more than meat,—a Sunday when the duty of the human child to know his divine Father, that duty transfigured to a privilege, fills every hour with fresh and eager and ingenious exercise of the best powers that the children of God possess. Every relaxing of the iron laws of Sunday ought to be the opening of the sacred day towards this divine ideal. Oh, let the men who want the Sunday made more free, be sure, as they are Christian men, that they are asking it in the interest of an elevated and not of a degraded spirituality. Let them know that it is not an easier but a harder Sunday that they ask, a Sunday more exacting in the demands it makes upon the personal conscience, upon the spiritual ambition, upon the constant, unsleeping vigilance of the soul which on the free day would come freely to the presence of God to its own best life. The man who clearly sees and solemnly accepts that responsibility has a religious right as against every church and teacher to claim the full freedom of his holy day.

All these same things are true about all religious observances, about coming to church, about stated times of prayer, about free intercourse with every kind of worship. In every case the tight, hard rule does to a large extent accomplish what it undertakes,

but it cannot undertake the best. He who launches out into a freer life sets sail for higher things, but he ought to know all the dangers of the voyage and be ready for all the patience and watchfulness and sacrifice it will require. If he has faced all that, then let him sail, but not till then. That is the true law of all liberty.

I think that no man carefully reads the words of Christ and does not feel how full his soul is always of this truth which I have tried to preach to-day. He came to lead his people out to freedom. He came to show the love of God. I think that as He stands there in the porch of the Hebrew temple preaching His Christian Gospel we can often seem to see upon His face and to hear trembling in His voice a deep anxiety. He evidently dreads lest to these people freedom and love should seem to be the abrogation and not the consummation of the Law. "Think not that I am come to destroy, I am not come to destroy but to fulfil," these are His earnest warning words. The broad is more exacting than the narrow; the complete makes larger demands than the partial; how He is always insisting upon that! It was said by them of old time "Thou shalt not forswear thyself. But I say unto you, swear not at all." "Ye have heard that it hath been said an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto you resist not evil." Everywhere He is so anxious that His Gospel should seem to be not the corruption but the transfiguration of duty. That the broad is more exacting than the narrow, that the complete makes larger demands than the

partial, that no theology is really an advance on what has gone before it unless it deepens the sense of personal duty and the awfulness of living,—these are the convictions which we want to see firmly set in the minds and consciences of men; and then there is no need to fear,—nay, we may rejoice in and be thankful for every sign of liberal thought and action, every claim of personal freedom which men make for the belief and worship of their souls.

There is a picture which one dares to hope is being realized in many a brave and faithful spirit in these days of ours. A true and earnest man longs for a larger view of God and for a chance to live more freely in His service. By and by he finds that he can have such a chance, that it belongs to him as God's child. He takes it joyfully. He lives in larger doctrine, in more spiritual relation to all ordinances; and yet as he grows more free he grows more scrupulously, more eagerly obedient. Every wish of God, discerned by free spiritual sympathy, holds him like a law, and his daily delight lies in finding how strong is love to do the work which once he thought could not be done except by fear. Every new theological breadth means a new obligation to be pure and true and holy. It is as if the world had been hooped with iron and kept shut up in a vacuum till some day it was flung freely abroad into its atmosphere, and found its iron hoops no longer needed, only because its new liberty held it so close into a sphere. That is the picture of the best progress of earth, and the promise of the best blessedness of heaven.

We have wandered far enough from the old banks of the Nile where stands King Pharaoh vainly promising that if the thunder and the hail will only cease he will be good. But I hope in all our morning's wandering we have been learning that the ceasing of hail and thunder of itself makes no man good, that no mitigation of theology, no truer presentation of God, no fading out of old threats, no relaxing of discipline, however they may sweetly tempt men to a higher life, can ever abolish that which is the first law and the highest privilege of human life, the everlasting need of moral struggle, of patient watchfulness over ourselves, of resolute fight with ourselves and of humble prayer to God, and of brotherly devotion to our brethren which alone makes us truly men.

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